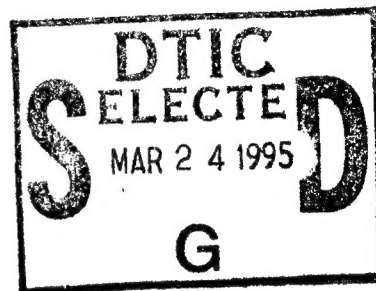


**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**



THESIS



**THE FAR EASTERN BORDER: AN ASPECT OF
RUSSO-CHINESE RELATIONS**

by

Jeffrey L. Scribner, Jr. and George L. Blasco

December, 1994

Thesis Advisor:

Patrick J. Parker

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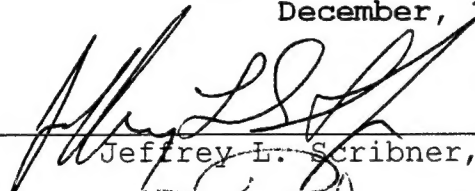
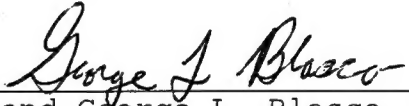
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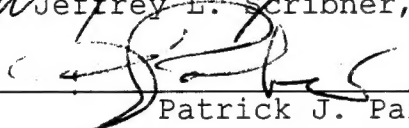
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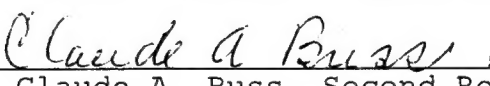
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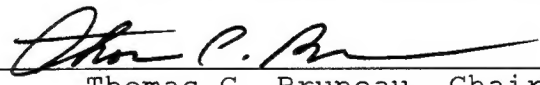
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ABSTRACT

Both China and the Russian Federation still claim rightful ownership of numerous small riverine islands which make up a portion of their long Far Eastern border. While the majority of the Russo-Chinese border disputes have been laid to rest, the disposition of these islands has prevented the two countries from completely finalizing a border agreement.

The objectives of this thesis is to concentrate on the historical backround of the border dispute, trends in current bilateral border talks, and to identify a potentially dangerous new ingredient which may dampen hopes for a successful new agreement - Chinese influx into the Russian Far East. It is the hypothesis of this thesis that both Russia and China, at the government to government level, will strive to maintain the status quo, but that on a local level, continued disagreement and intransigence on both sides will continue and prevent Russo-Chinese relations in the region from being normal and stable.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Both China and the Russian Federation still claim rightful ownership of numerous small riverine islands which make up a portion of their long Far Eastern border. Both countries, over a period of approximately three hundred years, have physically occupied the islands in question, but the current disposition of the islands in question has yet to be finalized.

The Russian and Chinese governments have recently signed border agreements, and are jointly demarcating the border. The border agreements are, however, not finalized as the riverine boundaries and the ownership of the islands located therein, have not yet been agreed upon.

The objectives of this thesis is to concentrate on the historical backround of the border dispute, trends in current bilateral border talks, and to identify potential problems which could disrupt the normalization process which the Russians and Chinese are currently undergoing.

Historical backround of the Russian expansion into the Far East and their intitial contact, and subsequent dealings with the Chinese is provided as an introduction. The research then turns to border talks and Russo-Chinese

efforts to physically demarcate the border. The differences between the governments' policies with regard to the border, and the feeling and actions of the regional population are then covered. In addition, a recent trend of Chinese influx, to include illegal immigration and crime, into the Russian Far East has caused a great deal of concern among local and government level Russians alike. In light of this, though overall Russo-Chinese relations have improved greatly in recent years, there are still significant obstacles which still need to be removed before the Russians and Chinese will enjoy truly normal relations.

At this writing the Russians and Chinese have signed a border agreement, but it is not conclusive. Talks remain open and additional high level summit meetings, during which border issues will be discussed, will continue to be held on an annual/bi-annual basis, however, the final disposition of the disputed territory is not likely to be agreed upon for the foreseeable future.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The definition of the word *border* according to The American Heritage Dictionary is:

bor'der. 4. The line or frontier area separating political divisions or geographic regions; boundary.¹

The current border as it stands, between the Russian Federation and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), is the result of over 300 years of confrontation, sometimes bloody, between these two regional powers. The confrontation over the border started in the 17th century when the first Russian settlers ventured into the river basin known as the "Black Dragon"² and continues to this very day. At the center of the dispute is the Amur-Ussuri River Basin. The history of the two empires since their first encounter during the 17th century has varied from pitched battles to enduring peace. The border has been one of the important issues that has determined the course of Sino-Russian

¹The American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1985.

²"Black Dragon" is the Chinese term for the Amur family of Asian rivers which include the Amur and Ussuri rivers. They are northern flowing rivers which travel through thousands of miles of forests and tundra on their way to the Sea of Okhotsk.

relations and we believe that an equitable demarcation of the border is necessary for continued peaceful relations between these two powers. The Amur-Ussuri River Basin has been the focus of a new effort by the governments of the Russian Federation and the PRC to solve "once and for all" this potentially volatile issue.

The objectives of this thesis will concentrate on the historic background of the border dispute, trends in current bilateral border talks, and identify a potentially dangerous new ingredient which may dampen hopes for a successful new border agreement-- Chinese influx into the Russian Far East.

The historical background, which is the most important aspect of this thesis, will include a description of the first contact between Russian settlers and the Chinese Empire (Chapter II) which date back to 1643. This initial historical background is followed by a description of the "Unequal Treaties" (Chapter III) signed between the Russian and Chinese Empires in the 19th century. These treaties were imposed upon China when Russia took advantage of Chinese weakness, due to military conflict between China and other European powers, specifically England and France, and extended their eastern frontiers into territory which had been established as Chinese over a hundred years earlier.

China's relations with the Soviet Union, and now Russia, have been periodically marked by attempts to reassert China's sovereign independent status and efforts to recoup the losses of the Empire³. The late 1960's saw a dramatic increase in harsh rhetoric and polemics exchanged between the PRC and the Soviet Union. The widening gap in the relations between the two continued in a downward spiral and reached its nadir in the latter stages of Mao Tse Tung's Cultural Revolution. The PRC government continued to heatedly raise the issue of lost territory and the unequal treaties which the Chinese maintained were "imposed under duress." The Chinese and the Soviets eventually came to blows over these issues. The build up to, and the actual March 1969 border fighting, which took place on frozen river islands, will be described in the next section (Chapter IV).

The next part of the thesis (Chapter V) will cover the swift cessation of hostilities, progress toward normalizing relations between the two countries, and military confidence building measures. The issue of regional security from a Russian perspective will also be included in this chapter.

A key aspect of the normalization of relations between

³Gary L. Scott, Chinese Treaties, New York, Oceana Publications, Inc., 1975, pp. 27-28.

the PRC and the Soviet Union (and subsequently with the Russian Federation) has been an equitable demarcation of their long common border, the Amur basin in particular. A description of the border talks and subsequent agreement in 1991 (Chapter VI) will follow. In this chapter the physical demarcation of the border, the feelings of both high level government officials and local inhabitants, as well as current and future summit meeting will be covered.

We have also identified a potentially explosive issue in the relations between the PRC and the Russian Federation -the influx of Chinese nationals (which includes illegal immigration) into the Russian Far East. This problem, described in the next section (Chapter VII), has raised serious concerns among both local Russians and government officials as the influx of Chinese has impact on demographics, political power, the local economy, and crime.

The conclusion (Chapter VIII) of the thesis will tie the previous chapters together and present prospects and implications for a possible future.

B. IMPORTANCE

The impact of the relationship between Beijing and Moscow on the stability, cooperation, and security in the

Amur-Ussuri River Basin is of great significance. The threat of future hostilities over the border is at an all time low, however, if the current positive course of relations between Russia and China were to sour, the potential for conflict would rear its ugly head. This would have a damaging effect on the stability of the countries surrounding the Pacific Rim and the rest of the world.

II. THE RUSSIAN PUSH INTO EAST ASIA

A. OVERVIEW

What were the underlying factors which caused the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the People's Republic of China (PRC), two communist states which only a decade earlier were close allies, to engage in regimental level combat over disputed river islands and border demarcation in March of 1969? In order to answer this question one must delve into the depths of history and explore the very first contacts between these two. We believe this to be relevant to the clashes of twenty-five years ago, however different the former governments and political systems may have been than from those governments which were in power in the late 1960's. The history of the two empires from their first encounters with each other in the Amur river valley during the mid-seventeenth century varies between pitched battles and enduring peace.

The Chinese and Russian empires first collided in the Amur River valley. The local population was politically subordinate to the newly developing C'hing dynasty, paying tribute to their Manchu suzerains in Peking. The Russians, who had moved south from central Siberia in search of new

arable land to raise and harvest crops in order to alleviate food shortages in Siberia, were, relative to the Manchus, in a position of great weakness. They were lacking in

personnel and were overextended due to extremely long lines of communication and supply. Due to vastly different social and political orientations of the two empires, military confrontation was inevitable. The subsequent fighting ensued on and off for the next several decades and after a series of defeats, the Russians sued for peace. The first treaty, which the Chinese negotiated from a position of strength, demarcated the boundary between the two empires and led to a peace which lasted approximately 165 years.

With the subsequent decline of China in the nineteenth century, Russia, along with other European powers, took advantage of Chinese weakness and extended their eastern frontiers into territory which had been established as Chinese over a hundred years earlier. The extensive land grabbing conducted by the Russians was eventually halted after a series of treaties was negotiated with the Chinese government. These are the treaties which have been referred to as "the unequal treaties" by the Chinese government.

As the relationship between Russia (and later the Soviet Union) and China ran its course, the issue of unequal

treaties "imposed under duress" periodically came to the fore. China's relations with Russia since the founding of the Republic in 1911, continuing through the establishment of the People's Republic, and up to the point of hostilities in the late 1960's, have been marked by attempts to reassert China's sovereign independent status and efforts to recoup the losses of the Empire.⁴

B. RUSSIAN EXPANSION INTO ASIA

"For five centuries, Russians have been seeking a final frontier which they never find."⁵

Russian expansion into the Asian frontier began not long after Ivan the Terrible captured the Tartar city of Kazan in 1552. Russian pioneers acting in the Tsar's name began to penetrate beyond the Urals into the vast area of Siberia. Yermack the Cossack conducted numerous raids into western Siberia between 1579 and 1584, captured the city of Sibir from the Tatar Khan Kuchum, and formally opened up

⁴Gary L. Scott, Chinese Treaties, New York, Oceana Publications, Inc., 1975, pp. 27-28.

⁵William G. Bray, Russian Frontiers: From Muscovy to Khrushchev, New York, Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963, p. 11.

Siberia to Russian exploration and settlement. The lure of this area to the Russians was the prospect of expanding their fur trade, though the addition of large tracts of land into the expanding Russian Empire was also an incentive. The pioneers, later supplemented by Cossacks and regular army troops, used the rivers (the Ob, Enisei, Lena, and Amur systems) for travelling and constructed wooden forts at key points along them.⁶ Given the time period and the fact that local indigenous populations resisted the Russians on occasion, the expansion into Siberia and the Far East was remarkably rapid. In just sixty years (1579-1639) of eastward expansion, the Russians reached the Pacific Ocean and Sea of Okhotsk.

In the period from 1580 to 1648 Russia pushed from the Urals to the Pacific, acquiring over four and a half million square miles of additional territory. The conquests of this period did not include the Amur or Ussuri regions, which were taken over later. In the initial drive across the Siberian Plain, the Russian pioneers met little armed resistance from the native populations they encountered. When the native tribes attempted to resist Russian

⁶J. N. Westwood, Endurance and Endeavor: Russian History 1812-1971, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 134.

domination, the battles which ensued were typically one-sided as the natives lacked organized armies and weapons. The Russians' real enemy during this time was the weather and the ruggedness of the terrain. Even though the natives did not militarily resist the Russians to any significant degree, their dealings with the indigenous populations the Russians were rather harsh.⁷

Historians often compare the Russian advance across Siberia to the American westward expansion, and there are strong resemblances.⁸ Russians and Americans both sought new sources of fur in the wilderness. Settlers followed the fur traders, and new towns sprang up. The first of these permanent Siberian settlements, Tyumen, was founded in 1586. Yakutsk was reached in 1637, and just two years later the Russians reached the sea. This eastward expansion continued, and by the 18th century Russian pioneers reached across the Bering Strait and established settlements in Alaska, Oregon, and California. In contrast, the Russians refrained from expansion southward during earliest stages of

⁷William G. Bray, Russian Frontiers: From Muscovy to Khrushchev, New York, Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1963, p.47.

⁸Mark Mancall, Russia and China: Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728, Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 9.

their eastward expansion probably in order to avoid conflict with the Chinese Empire.

As was noted earlier, Russian expansion into the Far Eastern Territory was based on the desire to acquire land for military and commercial uses. But an underlying factor for this expansion, which was considered the more noble cause, was the civilizing role of God, specifically the Russian Orthodox faith. The Slavophiles, especially the ones whose doctrine espoused Pan-Slavism, began to claim that the Russians had a moral right to impose themselves on Asia, since it was in fact an Asian nation. The Russian advance into this area started to refer to itself as the liberator of Chinese subjects from their moral oppressor, the Chinese Empire. For their part, the native populations, who were living on the periphery of the two empires, were being pushed into the Chinese sphere of influence due to the harsh treatment they received at the hands of the Russian "liberators." In fact, the natives actually appealed for help from the Manchus, who generally acted as the protectors of the area.⁹

⁹Ibid.

C. THE PUSH INTO THE AMUR BASIN

The Chinese reaction to the Russian incursion into the Far East, specifically the first in the Amur Basin in 1643, (where the contested territory now lies) was initially one of clashes between the Russian settlers and Amur natives under the influence of the Manchu forces. The first Russian expedition into the area was lead by a man named Poyarkov.

The Poyarkov expedition was significant in several respects. First it provided the first Russian eye-witness information about the Amur and its resources. Second, it alienated the local inhabitants along the Amur and warned the Manchus to take steps to stop the barbarian invasion.¹⁰

The second important attempt to conquer the Amur was made by Erofei Pavlovich Khabarov.¹¹ In April 1649 Khabarov set out from Yakutsk, followed the Olekma route, and reached

¹⁰Vasily Poyarkov was the leader of an expedition (1643-1645) which was the first attempt by the Russians to gain access to the Amur Basin where it was rumored abundant food sources existed. His party killed or captured many of the natives in the region. This action set the tone for the future relationship between the Amur natives and the Russians. The Amur natives would favor Manchu domination of the region because of this incursion. Another result of this expedition was the discovery of a major access route from Yakutsk to the Amur region. This new route came to be known as the Olekma Route, and was found to be more convenient than the Aldan-Zeya system used by Poyarkov.

¹¹Mark Mancall, Russia and China: Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728, Harvard University Press, 1971, p.23.

the Amur region easily. Upon his return to Yakutsk about one year later, Khabarov reported to the Tsarist authorities that the Amur region was invaluable and could play a major role in eastern Siberia's economy. Khabarov claimed that grain had been found in large pits in deserted villages, and concluded that only two weeks would be required to transport sufficient grain to Yakutsk, and that only six thousand men would be required to conquer the Amur Basin.¹²

Khabarov equipped a new expedition in the summer of 1650 and returned to the Amur. This expedition was marked by conflict between the Russians and the local population, the largest being in the vicinity of the Daur village of Albazin. The Russians won several battles against the natives due to their superior technology and firepower (muskets over bows and arrows) and took foodstuffs and cattle for their own uses. Again, Khabarov reported to his superiors that the region was rich and could easily supply Yakutsk's food needs for years. Additionally, he reported that enough grain could be extracted from the natives to feed twenty-thousand men or more.¹³

Khabarov and his men wintered over at Albazin and set

¹²Ibid, p.24.

¹³Ibid.

out once again the following June. After four days, his party reached the village of Guigudar, and for the first time encountered Manchus. Khabarov's expedition stayed in Guigudar for several weeks, demanding tribute from the local population. In the countryside in the vicinity of the village near the Zeya and Sungari rivers, he encountered Duchers, Dahurs, vassals of the Manchus, and also Achans. The initial meeting was peaceful, however, a force of about one-thousand Achans and Duchers attacked the Russians on the night of October 8, 1651.¹⁴ Once again, due to superior firepower, the Russians won the battle. What was to come next, however, took the Russians completely by surprise.

The local populations, from whom the Russians had been exacting tribute and generally treating harshly, turned, unbeknownst to the Russians, to the Manchus for protection, or if that was not feasible, then requested that they be granted permission to "accept Russian suzerainty."¹⁵ The following spring (1652) the Manchus attacked the Russians in the vicinity of Achansk (called Wu-cha-la by the Manchus).

¹⁴Ibid, p. 25.

¹⁵Ibid, p. 25. Apparently these requests were forwarded to the government in Peking, and subsequently a Manchu army was raised for the purposes of finding Khabarov and his men and driving them out of the Amur region.

Due to faulty leadership and tactics on the part of the Manchus, Khabarov and his men were able to repulse the attack. The battle at Achansk was, however, only the beginning of direct military conflict between the Manchu and Russian empires. The next four years saw sporadic conflict between the two sides, with each side winning its share of battles. The Russians were, however, being steadily pushed out of the region as it was at this time that the Manchu empire was reaching the height of its power.

The conflict came to a head on 30 June 1658 in a battle on the Amur River just to the south of the mouth of the Sungari River. In this battle the Manchus won a substantial victory and effectively cleared the Amur region of Russians as far north as Nerchinsk, but the Manchus did not pursue the Russians any further, and the stage was set for future conflict in the region.¹⁶ This defeat forced the Russians to abandon incursions into the region on the official military level, but it did not stop Russian and Cossack "outlaws" from conducting raids and exacting tribute from the native populations in the area.¹⁷

¹⁶Ibid, p. 28.

¹⁷Ibid, p. 28. Official Russian activities were limited to three blockhouses in the area, with the most important being Nerchinsk.

For the next several years, until 1660, several Russian outlaw bands were destroyed or driven off by the Manchus, and by 1664 relative peace had descended over the region. The Manchus, having been lulled into complacency after several years of Russian inactivity, were slowly abandoning the region. The reason for the withdrawal of Manchu military power from the Amur area was because they needed to put their efforts into quelling rebellions, which were beginning to develop in southern China. As a result, the Russians, however apprehensively, began to move back into the Amur basin toward the end of 1664. Several more years of Manchu inactivity in the north passed, while more and more Russians were moving into the area and establishing permanent settlements.¹⁸ When the Manchus finally settled their domestic problems and were once again able to concentrate on the Russian problem to their north, they found that they now had to deal "not with outlaw bands of

¹⁸Ibid, p. 31. At this time, in the mid to late 1660s and into the 1670s, the Manchus were forced to deal primarily with the consolidation of their newly formed C'hing dynasty (having recently taken the reins of power from the Ming rulers). This problem was compounded by the fact the Manchus had a serious shortage of soldiers with which to fight. The Manchus were thus unable to pursue their victories over the Russians to the point of expelling them once and for all from the basin.

Cossacks, but permanent settlements officially integrated into Russia's Siberian colony."¹⁹

By the early 1680's, having consolidated their hold in China, the Manchus took it upon themselves to establish a position of military strength on their northern frontier from which they could force the Russians to enter into negotiations on terms favorable to the Manchus.²⁰ The C'hing emperor's plan was, through military action, to remove the Russian threat to his northern frontier, while at the same time dispatching letters to Albazin, Nerchinsk, and Moscow in order to get the Russians to enter into diplomatic negotiations.²¹

Between 1681 and early 1685 both sides were engaged in building up their respective force levels and constructing defenses. The Russians were, however, faced with a shortage of manpower, even though they were apparently determined to

¹⁹Ibid, p. 32.

²⁰Given that the Manchus had at this time successfully taken hold of power in China and firmly established their C'hing dynasty, from this point on they will be referred to inclusively as 'Chinese.'

²¹Ibid, p. 115. The Manchu emperor, K'ang-hsi, did not seek to conquer the Russians, but rather to demonstrate to them that the Manchus were sufficiently strong to force them into a negotiated settlement.

defend their settlements in the region."²²

On 23 June 1685 the Chinese were in position, with a force of over three-thousand soldiers, to attack the Russians at Albazin. The leader of the Chinese force, Pengcun, was under orders by the C'hing emperor to demand that the Russians surrender before resorting to violence.²³ Reportedly, the Russians were given such a chance to surrender but refused. A battle ensued, and within a few days the Russian garrison was forced to sue for peace. During the following negotiations, the Chinese were persuaded to allow the surviving Russians to evacuate, with their belongings, to Nerchinsk. Meanwhile, having received letters from the C'hing emperor, by the second half of 1685 the Tsarist government decided to "abandon its Amur lands in the face of superior Chinese power."²⁴

The Chinese, for their part, once again did not follow

²²Ibid, p. 131. The Russians were simply unable to overcome the problems associated with the scarcity of fighting men and the exceedingly long lines of communication and supply. By the time war once again came to the Amur region, the Russians were grossly unprepared.

²³Ibid, p. 132. The emperor's instructions were to allow the Russians a chance to surrender and return the land they seized to China. If they did surrender, they were to be allowed to return to their homeland.

²⁴Ibid, p.134. This was official policy. What was actually transpiring in the Amur basin was a completely different matter.

up their victory, but instead celebrated their limited success. The Russians took full advantage of this and in 1686 moved back into Albazin yet again. Unfortunately for the Russians, they were not satisfied to stay in Albazin and take advantage of the favorable local conditions to harvest crops in an effort to alleviate Siberia's food shortage. In a bold and brazen act, a Russian expedition set south down the Amur River in an attempt to re-establish the pre-1685 lines.²⁵ This expedition encountered a smaller Chinese force and after a brief battle, forced them to flee. When news of yet another Russian incursion into Chinese territory reached the emperor, he was "incredulous, and decided to initiate military action immediately."²⁶

The Chinese forces arrived outside of Albazin on 18 July 1686, and in keeping with the emperor's policy, demanded that the Russians surrender immediately. The Russians refused, whereupon the Chinese laid siege to the settlement. The siege lasted until 3 November 1686 when it was lifted by order of the C'hing emperor, who had received word from the

²⁵Ibid, p. 136. This expedition was also charged with collecting tribute from the local populations, which had previously been under the Russian suzerainty prior to 1685, and to cultivate additional land to aid in food production for the Russian Siberian colony.

²⁶Ibid, p. 137.

Tsar that he was interested in a peaceful settlement to the dispute.²⁷ The next several months were characterized by inaction on the part of both sides, and a sort of 17th century "sitzkrieg" ensued. The Chinese were obviously the stronger of the two, and, though the emperor was not inclined to continue military action, he was adamant that negotiations with the Russians be undertaken under the most favorable conditions. The war was now over, and the first peace treaty between the Russians and Chinese was in development.

D. THE TREATY OF NERCHINSK

This treaty, negotiated and concluded in August 1689 under conditions of Chinese military superiority, was China's first treaty with a European power and was a diplomatic triumph for China. Also, the treaty served as a distinct dividing point between the first two periods in Russian-Chinese relations. The first of these periods was the military hostilities between the two states detailed above, while what was to follow could be characterized as a

²⁷Ibid, p. 139. By the time the siege was lifted less sixty-six men of the Russian garrison of several hundred troops were still alive.

period of accommodation.⁻⁸ Thus the realm of diplomatic relations between Russia and China was ushered in. From now on the two powers would have the opportunity to work out their disputes peacefully through conflict avoidance, rather than direct action on the battlefield.

Given the overwhelming military superiority of the Chinese in the area, one might wonder why the Chinese did not take the opportunity to force the Russians all the way back to Yakutsk. The reason may have been that the Chinese (specifically the C'hing dynasty Manchus) not only had to face rebellion within China itself, but also because of the rise of other foreign powers elsewhere along their borders. A tribe known as the Jungars were rising in power in central and western Mongolia and causing instability in Inner Asia. This region was much farther to the west and closer to Russian lines of supply and communications, and therefore it was much easier for the Russians to influence developments. The Chinese did not want the Jungars to seek Russian aid in Mongolia and therefore strengthen Russian power along the Chinese frontier. As a result, the Chinese brought the Russians to the bargaining table not only to delineate the Far Eastern frontier, but also to satisfy the emperor's

²⁸Scott, p. 18.

desire for stability in the Jungar regions. This desire "impelled the Chinese to seek Russian neutrality in Inner Asia and impinged directly and immediately on both delegations to the meetings."²⁹

The most obvious cause of conflict between the two powers was the frontier over which they had been fighting for the past several decades was not clearly defined. Due to the fact that neither side had permanently inhabited the area for any significant period of time, there was no accurate geographical survey of the region. As far as claims of ownership of the region, Russia claimed the Amur "by right of colonization."³⁰ The Chinese lay claim to the Amur region because the local tribes were vassals to the C'hing dynasty and paid tribute to them. Their contention was that it was not necessary for the Chinese themselves to actually inhabit the area for it to be Chinese territory.

After lengthy negotiations, the final treaty ended up

²⁹Mancall, p. 141. The negotiations were dominated by the problems the Russians and Chinese faced from their very first contact: delineation of the frontier, the return of fugitives, the conduct of trade, and the creation of institutions for the development of future relations.

³⁰Ibid, p. 142. The claim to new territory by 'right of colonization' was currently in vogue as the European powers began their long colonization movements into the Americas, Africa, and Asia.

being more or less fair to both sides. The western portion of the frontier in question was drawn between Nerchinsk, which was to remain under the control of the Russians, and Albazin.³¹ The remainder of the frontier east of Albazin was to extend roughly along a line formed by the Yabluni mountain range east to the Sea of Okhotsk. Even though there was no precise demarcation of the border, the Russians were forced to withdraw entirely from the Priamorye area.

Even though there had been sporadic trade going on between the two powers since their first contact, the Nerchinsk Treaty further opened the door to trade. The trade relationship after the signing of this treaty did not develop to the degree that both parties would have liked, however, due to bureaucratic obstacles set up by the Chinese.³² This trade situation continued to deteriorate until formalized in the Treaty of Kyakhta in 1727. From this point on the relationship between Russia and China was supposed to be peaceful in nature, and trade was to flourish

³¹Albazin was, however, not to be occupied by either side. Instructions were issued for the complete destruction of this outpost and the return of all Russians, their property, and military equipment to the Russian side of the frontier.

³²Mancall, p. 200. The Chinese attempted to secure a state monopoly on trade and restrict trade routes, limited to caravans, from Russia because China was becoming steadily indebted to Russia.

to the benefit of both sides. The first section of the Kyakhta Treaty stipulates:

This new treaty was especially concluded so that the peace between both empires might be stronger and eternal. And from this day each government must rule and control its own subjects, and, greatly respecting the peace, each must gather and restrain its own so that they do not provoke any harmful affair.³³

In addition to this, formal inspection and delineation of the border was undertaken under the auspices of the Kyakhta Treaty. The Russians and Chinese went to great lengths to accurately determine the proper demarcation of the region and to stipulate the rules and regulations for the proper conduct of trade. It is obvious, after reading the text of the treaty, that there was a great deal of importance placed on these particular issues.³⁴ Following the conclusion of this treaty, there existed a long period of peace and stability between the two empires. This peace and stability would eventually come to an end, however, as the Russians, along with other European powers, took advantage of a declining and decaying Chinese Empire in the

³³Mancall, p. 302. Taken from the direct translation of the Treaty of Kyakhta, 21 October 1727.

³⁴Sections III and IV deal specifically with border demarcation, while sections V through X deal with the conduct of trade and official relations between the two empires.

mid-nineteenth century.

III. THE TREATIES OF AIGUN AND PEKING

A. RUSSIA ACQUIRES ADDITIONAL FAR EASTERN TERRITORY

Throughout the following 130 years, the development of the Amur region went very slowly. The Russians were forbidden to settle or work the area and reportedly all the Chinese did was "to settle the southern bank of the Amur River while the north remained no man's land."³⁵ Additionally, by the mid-nineteenth century the Russians were experiencing a great deal of trouble with the further development of their other Siberian possessions. The limiting factors were a lack of communications, a harsh climate, and the difficulty in obtaining supplies and provisions. These problems led the Russians to consider the "advisability of acquiring the Amur River valley, despite the treaties with China."³⁶ The goal was to improve communications with the Pacific regions and that food for future settlements could be grown.

At this time the Manchu Empire was in a position of

³⁵Alexander Preobrazhensky, "Our Far East: Origins," International Affairs, East View Publications, September 9, 1993, p. 81.

³⁶Barbara, Jelavich, A Century of Russian Foreign Policy: 1814-1914, J. B. Lippincott Co., 1964, p. 163.

great weakness. It had lost a great deal of strength, both military and diplomatic, as a result of the Opium War (1839-1842). Subsequent fighting with the British and French, who were trying to expand their own empires in Asia, not only left China weak, but gave the Russians the opportunity to 'slip in through the back door,' and take advantage of the situation. For her part, Russia had suffered serious losses in the Crimean War (1854), which had temporarily halted Russian imperial expansion in Europe. Since they could not advance in Europe, or into Central Asia (the 'Great Game' with Britain was underway in this area), the Russians decided to take control of the Amur region.

This new energetic, aggressive, and expansionist policy was capped off in 1847 by the appointment of Count Nikolai Nikolaevich Muraviev as governor-general of Eastern Siberia. Muraviev, without consulting his superiors in St. Petersburg, set south and began exploration of the region and the establishment of outposts. By 1854 Muraviev was sending flotillas down the Amur River from the Russian frontier deep into what had for the last century been considered Chinese territory.³⁷ Shortly thereafter, in

³⁷Alstair Lamb, Asian Frontiers: Studies in a Continuing Problem, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1968, p. 206.

flagrant violation of the Nerchinsk Treaty, a Russian outpost was established at Khabarovsk at the junction of the Amur and Ussuri rivers. Another outpost, the port of Nikolaevsk (named in honor of Tsar Nicholas), was set up near the mouth of the Amur River. The violation of Chinese territory was protested, but the Tsar replied to the Chinese that, "where the Russian flag has once been hoisted, it must not be lowered."³⁸

The aggressive Muraviev continued his push into the Amur region and sent three additional expeditions down the river, each larger than the preceding one. China lodged objections to the expeditions, each time without avail.³⁹ In March 1855 the Russian expansion was temporarily halted as Muraviev returned to Russia following the death of the Tsar. He subsequently returned to the Amur region, this time in the name of Tsar Alexander. Officially, Russia insisted that China cede the region, while China insisted the boundaries should remain as they were.

In May 1858 Muraviev was once again prepared to take full advantage of the crisis situation created by the further deterioration of French-Chinese relations and

³⁸Bray, p. 48.

³⁹Ibid, p. 49.

trouble in southern China. Muraviev cajoled, threatened, and "completed a masterful job of aggression that would have done credit to Stalin or Krushchev."⁴⁰ Even though the Russians forced the Chinese to the negotiating table without actually doing battle, Muraviev backed up his threats of military force by firing cannons at night into Chinese territory. Muraviev subsequently met with Chinese representatives on the middle reach of the Amur.⁴¹ Here he succeeded in securing Chinese recognition of the Russian claim to the north bank of the Amur River eastward to its junction with the Ussuri River. It was further agreed that the territory between the Ussuri River and the Pacific Ocean should be considered to be jointly owned until its final disposition could be settled at a later time.

Thus the Treaty of Aigun was signed 28 May 1858 by Muraviev and a local Chinese official (who was not authorized to conclude an agreement of this magnitude), which legalized Russia's conquests. China was to cede more

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Mark Mancall, "Russia and China: The Structure of Contact," Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples, Hoover Institution Press, 1972, p. 322.

In 1853 the Tsar granted Muraviev sovereign powers to carry on diplomatic negotiations in the Far East without reference to the Foreign Ministry in St. Petersburg.

than 185,000 square miles of territory which had been recognized as Chinese. China refused to ratify the treaty and repudiated it a year later, however, they were far too weak to actively resist the Russians.

In 1860, the Chinese situation vis-a-vis France and Great Britain was desperate. Anglo-French forces had fought their way into Peking and the Russians, in a brilliant diplomatic move of playing both sides against each other, succeeded in having Nicholas Pavlovich Ignatiev appointed as a mediator in the dispute. Ignatiev played the role not only of mediator between the Chinese and the Anglo-French forces, but also negotiated a land settlement in favor of the Russians, and at the expense of the Chinese. Ignatiev was very deceitful in his actions and literally tricked the Chinese out of the land in question. He also made the Anglo-French forces believe that a large Russian military expedition was poised and ready to support them.

Ignatiev double-crossed the Chinese and the French and British. He told the Western Powers that Russia had stopped her military mission for fear that Russian guns would be used against Anglo-French troops. This of course was a lie, since it was China and not Russia who had blocked the mission. He told the French that the fall of the Manchus would cripple trade, which was at least debatable. And he suggested to the French and the British that it would facilitate negotiations if they removed their troops from Peking, which they

had captured in October 1860. When this suggestion was followed, Ignatiev then told the Chinese that Russia had compelled the Western Powers to withdraw. So successful did Ignatiev operate that both the French and the Chinese asked him to mediate. He did so, the price to China being the Treaty of Peking, which gave to Russia all the land between the right bank of the Ussuri river and the sea (the Maritime Province). Complete freedom of frontier trade was also established.⁴²

Thus, the Treaty of Peking, was signed in November 1860 and compelled China to cede an additional 130,000 square miles of territory (later to be called the Maritime Krai) to Russia, and reaffirmed the validity of the Treaty of Aigun.⁴³ Thus, in just two years, through threats and deceit, Russia gained over 380,000 square miles of territory, including the major port city of Vladivostok ('master of the sea') without having to go to war. Russia now had over 1,500 miles of additional coastline, and ice-free access to the Pacific.

After three centuries, Peter the Great's ambition for an outlet on the open sea had been realized. Russia had now acquired a legal right not only to the country north of the Amur and east of the Ussuri, but also the entire coast of

⁴²Bray, p. 50.

⁴³Lamb, p. 207.

Manchuria, with its magnificent bays and harbors.⁴⁴ Russia's expansion and interference in the region was not at an end, however, and there were those in Russia who did not see the Amur-Ussuri line as the final, logical boundary between the two states. The Manchu Empire was still in rapid decline and, following the Sino-Japanese war of 1895, the whole of Manchuria and Korea "appeared to be within the grasp of Russia, whose power in the Far East, as the Trans-Siberian railway neared completion, was steadily increasing."⁴⁵

B. THE INTERIM YEARS

The years following the Aigun and Peking treaties were characterized by upheaval. In 1898, the Russians obtained a twenty-five year lease (in reality it was nothing more than outright annexation) of the Manchurian city of Port Arthur and about 1,300 square miles of the southern Manchurian Liaotung. Russia was on the move once again, adding vast expanses of territory to its empire. The Russians, in keeping with their policy of taking advantage of Chinese

⁴⁴Ibid, p. 51.

⁴⁵Lamb, p. 208.

weakness, exploited the opportunity provided by the 1900 Boxer Rebellion in China to occupy the remainder of Manchuria. Russians continued to expand apace, however, this time they ran into an equally expansive foe- the Japanese. A war ensued in which Russia was dealt a severe defeat and pushed out of Manchuria and back to their 1860 lines.⁴⁶

Following World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Russian Empire again turning toward Europe. During the first few years after the revolution, there were, however, a number of Soviet leaders who were still paying close attention to events in Asia. Some of these leaders "doubted the morality of Russia's continuing to enjoy the fruits of Tsarist expansion at the expense of the Chinese."⁴⁷ As a result in 1919 the Soviets announced, in the Karakhan Declaration, that they were hereby declaring void all Tsarist treaties with China and renounced the seizure and occupation of Chinese territory which had been "ravenously" taken from them by the Tsar's government.

What actually transpired, however, was completely different. An agreement, completed in 1924 between Russia

⁴⁶Lamb, p. 209.

⁴⁷Lamb, p. 209.

and China for the redemarcation of the Sino-Russian border, actually stipulated that the existing boundaries would be maintained.

The next major event in the Manchurian sector was the creation of the Japanese puppet state of Manchuoko. A treaty between the Soviets and the Japanese during the early stages of World War II ensured that the boundaries established in 1924 would remain in tact. This situation was changed in August 1945 when the Soviets invaded Manchuria and defeated the Japanese Kwangtung Army, thereby ending the war in China. Even though there were substantial numbers of Soviet troops in Manchuria for several years, World War II did not result in lasting acquisition of Chinese territory by the Soviets.⁴⁸ The Soviets, however, subsequently occupied all of Manchuria between 1945 and 1946, holding it until after the defeat of the Chinese Nationalists by Mao Tse Tung and the Communists in 1949.⁴⁹

The ten years following the Communist take-over in

⁴⁸Lamb, p. 209. This notwithstanding, the Soviets did manage to continue their Far Eastern expansion by taking the southern portion of Sakhalin Island. This part of the island had previously been under Japanese suzerignty by the decree of the Treaty of Portsmouth, which ended the Russo-Japanese War of 1905.

⁴⁹Lamb, p. 209. The Soviets, however, did keep troops stationed in Port Arthur until 1954.

China saw an alliance between the Soviet Union and the newly formed People's Republic of China. The closeness and cooperation between these two communist giants was short lived, however, and relations between the two quickly deteriorated. Thus the stage is set for the upcoming Sino-Soviet rift and the fighting along the border in 1969.

IV. BUILDING UP TO THE 1969 BORDER CONFLICT

A. OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

Up to this point this paper has outlined the basis for the border dispute between the Chinese and Russians in the Amur Region. This section of the dispute will focus on the events from 1947 onward that lead up to the 1969 confrontation, which threatened for the first time open warfare between the USSR and the PRC over what seemed to be an insignificant "tiny island." A partial explanation for the Sino-Soviet border confrontation of 1969 is based on three separate but closely related elements:

1. Peking demanded that the Russo-Chinese border treaties of 1858 and 1860 be declared "unequal" by the USSR.
2. Specific areas declared "in dispute" by the PRC along the Amur-Ussuri rivers, which the USSR refused to recognize.
3. The recurring Chinese demand for the withdrawal of forces Soviet from the Sino-Soviet Border.⁵⁰

⁵⁰David Rebs, "Soviet Border Problems: China and Japan," Conflict Studies, No. 139, 1982, pp. 4-5.

The border incident of 1969 did not erupt spontaneously but was fueled by a series of other border incidents that paralleled the downward course of Sino-Soviet/Russian relations.⁵¹ For nearly a decade after the formation of the communist PRC in 1947, border relations between the two regional powers were considered amicable. In fact, in 1949, during negotiations leading to the eventual Sino-Soviet treaty, Mao Tse-tung stated no more unequal treaties existed between the USSR and the PRC. The two states respected each others territory and signed in 1950 the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance.⁵² But in 1954, Chairman Mao brought up the issue of the Outer Mongolian border in a meeting with Khrushchev, who refused to discuss the matter.⁵³ Another attempt was made by Zhou En-Lie in 1957 when Khrushchev visited Peking, but there was still no "satisfactory answer."⁵⁴ Starting in 1959, Moscow began reporting a series of border incidents and provocations by

⁵¹Thomas W. Robinson, "The Sino-Soviet Border Dispute: Background, Development, and the March 1969 Clashes," The American Political Science Review, Vol. LXVI, No.4, December 1972, p.1175.

⁵²Ibid., p. 1177

⁵³Rebs, p. 6

⁵⁴Robinson, p.1177.

the Chinese. Overall, relations between the two powers were on the decline and,

in retrospect, it is apparent that border difficulties were an indicator of that decline and an important factor in Sino-Soviet relations as a whole during the next decade [1960s].⁵⁵

Rhetoric from the PRC and USSR also began to reflect the growing animosity over the border issue. In July 1964, the PRC severely criticized the Soviet Union for its "territorial ambitions,"⁵⁶ and said "there are too many places occupied by the Soviet Union including the Amur region." Moscow replied to the PRC's comments in the 2 September 1964 edition of Pravda by accusing Mao of "an openly expansionist program with far reaching pretensions."⁵⁷ Just prior to these verbal attacks Moscow suggested to China that the two begin secret negotiations about the border dispute.

These secret consultations were intended to serve as a

⁵⁵Ibid, p. 1177.

⁵⁶Ibid, p. 1177.

⁵⁷Rebs, p. 6. Thomas Robinson believes the situation could have become worse in 1964 had not Khrushchev been removed from power as the First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party. Mao charged that the Soviets had been concentrating troops along the border during this time. Robinson, p. 1179.

precursor, preparing the way for a precise determination of the boundary. The consultations began in earnest on 25 February 1964 and were meant to set the stage for further negotiations if enough progress was made. The Russians stated an agreement was reached "in principle" and that the proposed "talks" stage would begin October 15, 1964 in Moscow. The Chinese, however, did not respond to a note from the USSR dated September 26, 1964 inviting their diplomats to the table.⁵⁸

The main points under contention in these secret negotiations of 1964 were based on the procedures which would be used to delineate the border:

1. The Chinese wanted the Soviets to admit the inequality of the old treaties before they would sign or even negotiate a new treaty. If the Russians would denounce these treaties, the Chinese would move rapidly to negotiate a new treaty. The Chinese further stated they would also consider the old treaties in the new agreement.

2. The Soviet Union proposed to initiate a new treaty

⁵⁸Robinson, p. 1179.

and then annul the old ones. The Soviets distrusted the Chinese proposal described above. They thought the Chinese would back away from their promise of taking the old treaties into account.

3. As noted earlier in this paper, the Chinese based their case on the border dispute solely on the claim of invalidity of the "unequal treaties." But when international law is taken into account we find there are two cases. On the one hand, the Chinese contention states "conditions have changed and the old treaties are no longer valid," and on the other, the Soviets argued that "treaties retain their validity until explicitly altered by the treaty signatories." By delineation of the law, the judgment should go toward the Soviet argument. But in the world of "power politics," the law may allow the Chinese argument to prevail.⁵⁹

4. The Chinese also had one more point of contention with the Soviets. China claimed that according to the *Thalweg* argument, river boundaries "must follow the

⁵⁹Ibid, p. 1180.

deepest points of the river channel."⁶⁰ The Chinese asserted that most of the riverine islands under Soviet occupation actually belonged to them because of the *Thalweg* principle. The USSR adamantly refuted this claim.

Whatever the argument posed by either side, one thing remained clear after these failed negotiations: confrontation along the Amur region border was becoming more and more inevitable. In April 1966, the Chinese issued a set of "Regulations Governing Foreign Vessels on Rivers on the National Boundary" for no apparent reason. This marked the final collapse of the cooperation between the Soviet Union and the PRC on the development of the Amur and Ussuri river regions. The 1966 "Regulations" in effect, made all river traffic abide by Chinese rules such as examination of all ships, applications for permission to navigate the rivers, and requiring vessels to fly the PRC flag on the foremast while sailing along these rivers.⁶¹ No reason was ever given by the Chinese government for unilaterally declaring these regulations. In effect, if the Soviet Union

⁶⁰Ibid, p. 1181

⁶¹"Regulations Governing Foreign Vessels on Rivers on the National Boundary," NCNA, April 19, 1966.

agreed to these regulations they would "automatically have lost all sovereignty along the riverine borders with China."

Starting in 1967, the Soviets accused the Chinese of wildly provocative behavior along the Ussuri and Amur river regions. These incidents included the Chinese provoking fights and driving across Soviet territory in cars and trucks attempting to run down Soviet border guards."

The Chinese claimed the Soviets started violating their borders at about the same time. From January 1967 to March 2, 1969, the Chinese reported that Soviet troops intruded countless times on their "riverine islands." Some of the Chinese accusations against the Soviets included "ramming Chinese fishing boats, turning high pressure hoses on them," and assaulting and wounding Chinese frontier guards." The Chinese government also accused the Soviets of driving out "many Chinese inhabitants by force, demolishing their houses, and destroying their means of production and household goods."⁶⁴ Moreover, the Chinese said the Soviets "provoked" 4,189 border incidents from the breakdown of

⁶²Robinson, p. 1182.

⁶³Ibid, p. 1182.

⁶⁴Ibid, pp. 1182-1183.

border negotiations in 1964 to the conflict in March 1969.⁶⁵

What can be seen up to the border clash of March 1969 is a vicious circle of tit-for-tat violations between two unfriendly regional superpowers "who disagreed upon some specifics of border demarcation and who found the border a convenient place to express the general tension."⁶⁶ On March 2, 1969 this vicious circle would turn for the worse and put these powers on the brink of war.

B. THE BORDER CLASH

On a frozen winter night of March 2, 1969 a mixed group of three hundred Chinese frontier guards and soldiers of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA), dressed in snow camouflage, crossed from the Chinese side of the frozen Ussuri River to Damansky Island. This uninhabited island, situated on the Sino-Soviet border was the territory of the Soviet Union.⁶⁷ The Chinese also had claims to this island, which was known to them as Chen Pao. The Chinese soldiers, under cover of

⁶⁵Ibid, p. 1183.

⁶⁶Ibid, p. 1183.

⁶⁷Harold C. Hinton, The Sino-Soviet Confrontation: Implications for the Future, New York, Crane, Russak and Company Inc., 1976, p. 16.

darkness, dug in and set up a command post on the island. Meanwhile, on the Chinese bank of the Ussuri River, numerous reserves and additional firepower were getting into position by deploying antitank guns, grenade launchers, mortars, and heavy machine guns. The stage was being set for an ambush."

On the morning of 2 March, the Soviet Border guards noticed activity on the Chinese bank as a group of about thirty Chinese soldiers began moving toward the island chanting Maoist slogans. As was the usual case, the Soviet guards approached the Chinese and demanded their immediate withdrawal, a request to which the Chinese usually obliged. But in this case things would be different. The Chinese without warning, quickly pulled machine guns, which were hidden under their coats, and mowed down the Soviet troops which had been completely caught off guard. At the same time the three hundred Chinese soldiers hidden on Damansky Island ambushed another Soviet border guard unit as they attempted to help their comrades who were under attack. In the melee which followed, (according to Soviet sources), Soviet reinforcements from the Damansky Border garrison

⁸⁰O. B. Borisov and B.T. Koloskov, Soviet-Chinese Relations, 1945-1970, Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1975, p. 323.

raced to the scene and subsequently forced the Chinese to retreat from Damansky Island back into Chinese territory.

This entire confrontation lasted approximately two hours.

Both sides claimed victory, but "neither the Russian nor Chinese forces remained permanently on the island after the battle was over."⁶⁹

C. THE SECOND CONFRONTATION

The March 15 border skirmish differed greatly from the previously described skirmish on March 2 in that both sides were at a heightened state of alert, forces were much larger, and the element of surprise was absent. While both capitals were staging protest in the form of communiqués and demonstrations, forces along the Sino-Soviet border, especially around Damansky Island, were poised for combat. When the action finally started, it would be difficult to judge who began the hostilities.

After the first attack on March 2, the Soviets increased the frequency of their patrols around the island but did not station a permanent force, because it would have been easy for the Chinese to zero-in with artillery

⁶⁹Robinson, pp. 1188-1189.

bombardment. From Soviet information it was reported that on the night of the 15th, a small Soviet scouting party spent the night on the island and may have been used as bait to provoke a Chinese assault. The Chinese have stated that the "other side sent many tanks to the island at about 4:00 a.m. on the 15th attacking Chinese guards on patrol."⁷⁰ The Soviet version stated their early morning patrol discovered a group of Chinese that had dug in overnight.

Whatever the initial cause, the battle began in earnest around 9:45 or 10:00 a.m., with mortar and artillery from the Chinese bank. By 10:30, according to Soviet account, heavy fire from three points on the Chinese bank.⁷¹

When this initial barrage of artillery began, the Chinese sent a regiment consisting of over two thousand men on a mad dash across the ice and took possession of part of the island. When the Soviets realized they were confronting a force superior in manpower, they pulled back their machine guns and armored personnel carriers to the eastern side of the island. The Chinese used suppressive artillery fire in an effort to drive the Soviet armor off the ice and back to

⁷⁰Ibid, p. 1189.

⁷¹Ibid, p. 1189.

the Soviet side of the river. The Soviets allowed the Chinese to advance and then used a tactic that the American Army had used successfully against the Chinese in Korea.⁷²

With the Chinese in the open during their charge, the Soviets opened up with tanks, armored personnel carriers, and heavy machine guns. Also, artillery was used effectively by the Soviets in order to hit key targets up to four miles inland. It took three attacks by the Soviets to finally drive the Chinese off the island.⁷³ As one Soviet source put it: "There was nothing left of the Chinese but their belt buckles."⁷⁴ Casualties reported by both sides were sixty Soviets dead, eight hundred Chinese dead or wounded. All this death and destruction over a uninhabited, frozen island on the Sino-Soviet border would, fortunately, not degenerate into full scale warfare.

⁷²This was a tactic whereby the advancing force, which typically was much larger and positioned in a 'human wave' formation, was allowed to penetrate the defensive lines for a short distance before a massive counterstroke was unleashed.

⁷³Ibid, p. 1190.

⁷⁴Hinton, p. 17.

V. MOVING FORWARD TOWARD NORMALIZED RELATIONS

A. OVERVIEW

The border conflict of March 1969 did not escalate into general warfare between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China largely because of the Soviets' threat of a nuclear strike against China. After several months of both intimated and open threats of a Soviet nuclear missile strike against China's nuclear facilities, the Chinese were cowed and agreed to come to the bargaining table and the end of 1969. What followed was years of fruitless negotiations punctuated by intermittent agreements, more often than not on minor, seemingly insignificant issues.

Years of intransigence and frustration finally took its toll and in 1978 the talks were once again broken off. It appeared for a time that the relationship between the USSR and the PRC would slip backward into the dark days of the early sixties. This, however, did not happen and through mutual compromise both sides were back at the negotiating table toward the end of 1979.

The next stepping stone was the de-linkage of the border issue from normalized relations, the Chinese demand for settlement of the Three obstacles, and Mikhail

Gorbachev's landmark July 1986 Vladivostok speech. This speech clearly marked a new phase in Sino-Soviet relations and continues today in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

B. AFTERMATH OF THE BORDER CONFLICT

The clashes of March 2 and March 15 were not the only large scale shooting incidents to happen in the Amur-Ussuri basin in 1969. Over the course of the next several months, additional engagements between the Soviets and the Chinese took place. Aggressive patrolling by both sides lead to a series of firefights which ensued in March, April, May, June and August, alternating between the disputed islands in the Amur and Ussuri border rivers to the east and the Xinjiang-Central Asian border to the west.⁷⁵

The Soviets' aim was to convince the Chinese that they were willing and able to escalate the conflict. The Soviet goal was to intimidate the Chinese and thereby bring about a swift conclusion to the fighting along the border. The Soviets went about this by a variety of means:

⁷⁵Rodger Swearingen, Siberia and the Soviet Far East: Strategic Dimensions in Multinational Perspective, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, Stanford, California, p. 189.

1. Behavior in subsequent border encounters was characterized by the Soviets' use of heavy weapons (artillery and rockets), demonstrating a willingness to use higher levels of force than in previous encounters.

2. Soviet troop reinforcements moving into the border area was "discreetly advertised"⁷⁶ by foreign visitors and journalists who were allowed to observe the process.

3. Iterated repeated reminders to the Chinese of past occasions when the Soviet Union had engaged in combat in the Far East.

a. the 1938 fighting at Khalkin-Gol (near the Manchuria-Mongolia-Soviet border) against the Japanese.

b. the Soviet rout of the Japanese Kwangtung army in 1945, at the end of the Second World War. Chief of General Staff Marshal Zakharov, in an article entitled "An Instructive Lesson," recalled the "two converging strikes" into Manchuria which quickly defeated the Japanese. the Marshal went on to state that this

⁷⁶Ibid, p. 190.

"graphically testifies to what could happen to others."⁷⁷

4. In addition to the reminders of previous large-scale Soviet conventional warfare in the Far East, the Soviet leadership tried to convince the Chinese that there was "a real possibility of nuclear attack."⁷⁸

In order to convince the Chinese that a nuclear strike could be forthcoming, the Soviets endeavored to minimize the political risk, i.e. international criticism, of openly announcing they would initiate a nuclear attack upon the PRC, by conveying the possibility of just such an attack through innuendo and implication. In an obvious move to gain international sanction for a nuclear attack against China, the Soviets even tried to involve the United States. This is not to say the Soviets hoped the United States would join in an attack on the PRC, but would, upon being notified, inform the Chinese as to Soviet intentions. Toward this end, on 18 August 1969 a Soviet Embassy official in Washington asked a State Department official what would

⁷⁷Ibid, p. 191.

⁷⁸Ibid.

be the U.S. reaction to a Soviet strike upon Chinese nuclear facilities.⁷⁹

On 16 September 1969, in the *London Evening News*, the Soviets made their most direct and detailed threat of a nuclear attack against China. This article cited,

well informed sources in Moscow as asserting that Russian nuclear installations stand aimed at the Chinese nuclear facilities and that the Soviet Union prefers using rockets to manpower in responding to border clashes. The USSR has a variety of rockets to choose from, that the Soviets have a plan to launch an air attack on Lop Nor and that whether or not the Soviet Union will dare attack Lop Nor is a question of strategy, and so the world will learn of it afterwards.⁸⁰

C. RESOLUTION AND RESULTS OF THE 1969 BORDER CRISIS

Due to the various threats and intimations made by the Soviet Union in the months following the fighting along the border, the Chinese were in fact intimidated. In particular, the threat of a nuclear strike on the PRC made a

⁷⁹Ibid, pp. 191-192. The Soviet plan worked as they had intended. The United States did not support the Soviet move, but did, on 27 August 1969, make an announcement to diplomatic correspondents that the Soviets were contemplating an attack on China.

⁸⁰Ibid, p. 192.

deep impression on the Chinese leadership. From May 1969 and on, the Chinese made repeated reference in both official and unofficial statements to Soviet nuclear blackmail, the targeting of missiles against China and of the potential for a surprise Soviet nuclear attack.⁸¹

A meeting between premiers Zhou En Lai and Kosygin in Beijing in September 1969 helped to bring about a reduction in aggressive patrols by both the Chinese and Soviets along their common Far Eastern border and a resumption of the border talks which had been previously broken off in 1964. The resumption of talks, which were to be held on a bi-annual basis in Moscow, in October 1969 served, at the outset, only as a new forum in which the Chinese were able to express their charges of territorial thievery against the Soviet Union. Additionally, the Soviet Far Eastern military buildup and the threat of a nuclear attack also became sticking points in the border negotiation process. The Chinese even went so far as to demand the total withdrawal of Soviet military forces from territory claimed by the PRC

⁸¹Ibid, p. 193. References to Soviet nuclear blackmail were released by the PRC government in a number of forms, to include government statements and newspapers. In one such journal, the Chinese stated that if a handful of warmongers dare raid China's strategic sites, that would be war and the Chinese people would rise up in resistance.

as rightfully Chinese.⁸²

These bi-annual meetings in Moscow continued for years with very little progress having been made. Both sides did manage, however, to bring about an increase in cross-border trade, and the Soviets offered to accept, in 1973, the thalweg to demarcate the riverine boundaries. Additionally, both sides agreed to "accept the status quo on the border until exact boundary locations could be mutually accepted."⁸³ This notwithstanding, the Chinese maintained their intransigent stance on the issue of the "unequal treaties." The Soviets became exasperated at the Chinese stance and the relationship between the two began to deteriorate yet again. Thus, border talks were broken off at the Spring 1978 session. Table 5.1 shows, in brief, a compilation of dates and results of Sino-Soviet border talks held over a period of nine years.

To make matters worse, in January 1979 the Chinese attacked Vietnam, a Soviet ally, in response to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia the previous December. Not to be outdone, in December 1979 the Soviets invaded

⁸²Ibid, p. 194. This demand was subsequently dropped.

⁸³Lowell Dittmer, Sino-Soviet Normalization and Its International Implications, 1945-1990, University of Washington Press, 1992, p. 69.

Afghanistan, as result of which was to leave the Chinese with a renewed sense of being surrounded and isolated by a powerful, hostile Soviet Union. Events reached their nadir when on April 2, 1979 Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua announced to the Soviet ambassador to China that his government had "decided not to extend the Sino-Soviet treaty beyond its expiration on the grounds that the international situation had changed drastically."⁸⁴ The Chinese did not, apparently, put much stock in Leonid Brezhnev's January 1979 warning to the Chinese that if they decided to "abrogate the treaty, they should bear responsibility for the consequences."⁸⁵

The Chinese did not, however, seek to sever ties with the Soviets completely. In the same announcement of the intention not to renew the Sino-Soviet treaty, the Chinese offered to engage the Soviets in talks "on a separate basis from those on the border."⁸⁶ The Soviets agreed to this

⁸⁴Ibid. The expiration date set for the treaty was April 11, 1980.

⁸⁵Ibid. The Chinese were likely emboldened by the opening of diplomatic relations with the United States in the beginning of 1979 to the point where they could afford to push for getting their way vis-a-vis the USSR.

⁸⁶Ibid. The Soviets promptly accepted this proposal (17 April 1979), with both sides agreeing to suspend the deadlocked border talks in favor of focusing on the normalization of

proposal and as a result, talks opened in Moscow at the vice-ministerial level on September 27, 1979. A significant difference between the new normalization talks and the previous border talks was that following the initial meeting in Moscow, the talks were to be held on an alternating basis in both Beijing and Moscow.

TABLE 5.1 Border Talks

Dates	Result
October 20 to December 14, 1969	Talks convened under duress. PRC demands prior acknowledgement of "unequal treaties" and "disputed areas," proposing mutual withdrawal of border forces from the latter. USSR refuses all preconditions. Talks break off.
January to April 1970	USSR proposes border compromise based on territorial status quo without further discussion of historical legitimacy of treaties, suggest "overall" improvement in relations featuring economic and cultural exchanges. PRC refuses.
Mid-January to Summer 1971	USSR repeats offer of territorial compromise, including acceptance of the thalweg to demarcate river boundaries. PRC refuses.

relations.

March 20 to mid-July 1972	Rehashing of old arguments. No progress made.
March 6 to June 30, 1973	USSR repeats offer for nonaggression pact. PRC refuses.
June 25 to August 18, 1974	PRC tacitly drops claims to "unequal" status of treaties, agrees to sign nonaggression pact if Soviets agree to mutual withdrawal from disputed areas. USSR refuses.
February 12 to May 5, 1975	No progress. Soviet border violation in Xingjiang center of discussions.
November 27, 1976 to February 28, 1977	Deaths of Mao Tse Tung and Zhou En Lai. USSR suggests partial settlement and suspension of polemics. PRC refuses.
May 4 to June 1978	"Heated" talks broken off by mutual consent.

D. PROGRESS TOWARD NORMALIZATION

The newly commenced normalization talks got off to a rocky start. The Chinese, who had agreed to enter into negotiations without any preconditions, immediately raised three demands: 1) Reduction of Soviet troops along the PRC-USSR border, 2) Soviet aid to Vietnam and Vietnamese troops out of Cambodia, and 3) Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. These later became known as the Three [Fundamental]

Obstacles. The Chinese insisted that these Three Obstacles be directly linked to the normalization of economic and cultural relations, whereas the Soviets were interested in proceeding with normalization without respect to acceding to the Chinese demands. This differing stance on the issues, coupled with the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan resulted in the talks being put off until the fall of 1982.

With the resumption of talks, the Chinese eventually acquiesced and agreed to the Soviets' demanding the Three Obstacles be de-linked from establishing and expanding economic and cultural ties. During the course of the next six years, there would be a total of fourteen rounds of vice-ministerial talks, held on a bi-annual basis in Moscow and Beijing.⁸⁷ Despite lack of real progress with regard to the Three Obstacles the two sides slowly, but steadily improved their bilateral relations. 1986 was clearly the watershed year marking the beginning of Chinese-Soviet/Russian relations in the modern era. March 1986 saw the opening of the Sino-Soviet Committee on Economics, Trade, Scientific and Technical Cooperation whereby both

⁸⁷Dittmer, p.70. The even-numbered sessions were held in Moscow and the odd-numbered sessions in Beijing.

sides would exchange experience on economic planning and development. In addition, the Chinese opened a consulate in Leningrad and the Soviets one in Shanghai. Also, in a move which clearly indicated to the Chinese that the Soviets were willing to make concessions on the Three Obstacles, Mikhail Gorbachev delivered his now famous July 1986 Vladivostok speech.

A year later, border talks, which had been broken off eight years earlier, were reopened at the vice-ministerial level in Moscow February 9-23, 1987.⁸⁸ Both sides agreed to begin demarcation of the long border, starting in the east. These talks continue to the present day, and will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter VI.

E. CONCLUSION

The Chinese were at first suspicious of Gorbachev's pronouncements, though within two years of the Vladivostok speech the Soviets had "basically" removed all Three Obstacles.⁸⁹ Improvements in overall relations continued to improve apace. In 1988-1989 the USSR and PRC foreign

⁸⁸Dittmer, p. 77.

⁸⁹Dittmer, p. 80.

ministers exchanged visits, and in May 1989 Gorbachev visited Beijing. Full diplomatic relations are now in place between Moscow and Beijing, the Tienanmen Square massacre and fall of the Soviet Union notwithstanding. Russian President Boris Yeltsin has visited Beijing, and Chinese President Jiang Zemin has visited Moscow on several occasions. In a recent move, Zemin travelled to Moscow in October 1994, and while there signed a joint Chinese-Russian document proclaiming an end to hostility between the two states, and pledged they would no longer target nuclear missiles or use force against each other.

This latest visit and the signing of the document is yet another step toward complete and amicable diplomatic relations between Moscow and Beijing. There are, however, a number of considerable political differences which remain. For example, the Chinese still see Yelstin as a traitor to communism and that the Russian political and economic reforms are a mistake. For their part, the 'democratic' Russian politicians see the Chinese regime as unduly repressive.

Additional problems, which while they will not likely in and of themselves cause a dramatic shift in the current Sino-Russian diplomatic trend, could, taken together, grow

in importance and directly effect the nature of relations between the two. These problems, which include continued intransigence, on both sides, with regard to border demarcation, and mass immigration, will be addressed in Chapters VI and VII respectively.

VI. RUSSIAN-CHINESE FAR EASTERN BORDER DEMARCATION

A. OVERVIEW

Mikhail Gorbachev's several years of trying to solve the Sino-Soviet border dispute and thereby improve relations between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC) finally bore fruit in early 1991, a mere three months before the August coup attempt. On May 16, 1991 a pact, in which the issues of border demarcation were to be addressed and resolved over a period of several years, was signed in Moscow.⁹⁰ The signatories of the pact were Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev and Chinese Communist Party leader Jiang Zemin, who was on his second day of a five day visit to Moscow. This visit is significant in that it was the first such contact between the two communist giants since Mao Tse Tung's 1957 visit with Nikita Khrushchev.⁹¹

The pact, the result of three years of border discussions, was by no means all inclusive and only dealt with a portion of the 4,600 mile long border separating the two countries. The documents signed were designed to settle once and for all the dispute over the Far Eastern border

⁹⁰Facts On File, May, 1991, p. 376.

⁹¹Ibid.

between the eastern portion of outer Mongolia and North Korea. What must be noted, however, is that a number of sectors of the border in the Amur Basin, including Damansky Island, were not covered in the treaty.⁹² This notwithstanding, relations between the two were rapidly improving. Gorbachev, while seeing China as a source of economic aid, was interested in a more amicable relationship with China in order to reduce military expenditures and concentrate on the USSR's economic woes. The Chinese saw a blossoming relationship with the Soviet Union as being beneficial toward their position in the regional balance of power, and as a source of modern military hardware.

The August 1991 coup attempt in Moscow which deposed Mikhail Gorbachev also took some of the forward impetus out of the expanding Soviet-Chinese relationship. Now gone was the opportunity for a strategic alliance based on, albeit differing, communist ideals and the desire for a secure border. The Chinese reaction, or lack thereof, to the coup also caused a slowdown in their mutual relations. There is even evidence that Chinese Communist part documents stated that some hard-line Chinese officials were clearly

⁹²Ibid.

disappointed that the coup had failed.⁹³

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia inherited the bulk of the border with China and all that went along with it. While the opportunity for an alliance had gone by the way side, the border agreement, which had been signed the previous May, was subsequently ratified by both the Russian and Chinese parliaments in February 1992.⁹⁴ The ratification documents were then signed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin and the former Chinese President Yang Shangkun, and the treaty came into force. Additionally, the flow of high-tech weaponry from Russia to China was not only continuing, but expanding as newer and larger deals were negotiated and signed. Currently the Russians are selling approximately one billion dollars worth of military hardware to China on an annual basis. The trade in weapons also expanded into increased contact between the Chinese and Russian militaries. During a visit to Beijing in December 1992, Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed a memorandum of understanding "based on the principles of military

⁹³Robert A. Scalapino, "Russia's China Policy," East Asian Security in the Post-Cold War Era, New York, M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1993, p. 157.

⁹⁴Gerald Segal, "China and the Disintegration of the Soviet Union," Asian Survey, Vol. XXXII, No. 9, September 1992, p. 856.

cooperation with China."⁹⁵ This document also declared that Russia is "prepared to cooperate in all sectors, including the most sophisticated armaments and weapons."⁹⁶

B. BORDER DEMARCATION EFFORTS

While the broader aspects of Russian-Chinese relations continued to develop, the Far Eastern Border talks and demarcation thereof continued, albeit at a slow pace. Finally, in the spring of 1993, a joint Russian-Chinese border demarcation commission began the task of surveying and marking the border.⁹⁷ During previous attempts to accurately survey and mark the border, Chinese and Russian specialists made their own measurements separately, at different times, and using different methods. As of the spring of 1993, however, both sides made the decision to "strive for mutual understanding"⁹⁸ with regard to the

⁹⁵Hung P. Nguyen, "Russia and China: The Genesis of an Eastern Rapallo," Asian Survey, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3, March 1993, p. 300.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷"Status of Russian-Chinese Far Eastern Border Demarcation Eyed," 934Q0147B, Moscow, Moscow News, in English, 16 Jul, 1993, (FBIS-USR-93-129, 06 Oct, 1993, p.7).

⁹⁸Ibid.

border demarcation. In March 1993, a meeting of the joint Russian-Chinese border demarcation commission was held in Khabarovsk. It was at this meeting that the participants agreed to adhere to begin "practical implementation of the provisions of the Russian-Chinese Treaty of May 16, 1991 on demarcation of the border between the two states."⁹⁹

Despite the fact they were working with differing data on navigable channels and river depths, both sides agreed to, over a period of approximately five years, "determine the border line finally in the course of actual demarcation after joint hydrographical measurements."¹⁰⁰ The task of demarcating the border was to have begun in April 1993.

Even though agreements were reached and official documents were signed, the border demarcation work which is ongoing is not altogether joint, and is not progressing as smoothly as ideally intended. Certain areas of the border, specifically in the Amur-Ussuri river basin, are to be left alone until further negotiations can take place. Additionally, the portion of the border to be demarcated has been divided up into ten sectors to be demarcated independent of each other. This approach therefore has the

⁹⁹(FBIS-UMA-93-036, JPRS, 29 September 1993, p. 34).

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

potential for a lack of coordination between sectors which can result in a further border complications in the future. Also, there are those, primarily local residents and political figures on the Russian side, who are not pleased with the course of the work and believe the Chinese are deliberately taking advantage of the current chaos within Russia to encroach into Russian territory.

C. MOSCOW'S POLICY TOWARD FAR EAST BORDER

DEMARCATATION

Based on a review of Russian press reports, it has been determined that the official Russian policy is supportive of the demarcation efforts which are underway. However, it appears that the Russians who have vocalized support for these efforts are predominantly Moscow-based politicians. Yevgeniy Vladimirovich Afanseyev, the first deputy head of the First Directorate of the Asia-Pacific Region at the Foreign Ministry, is one such politician who has voiced support for the demarcation efforts.¹⁰¹ Afanseyev, a self-

¹⁰¹"Official Comments on Relations with China," LD1111103893, Moscow, Ostankino Television First Channel Network, in Russian, 10 Nov, 1993, (FBIS-SOV-93-217 10 Nov, 1993).

proclaimed "orientalist"¹⁰² stated in an interview that the demarcation of the border is a simple matter of international law; that the border runs through the middle of a river in the case of a non-navigable rivers, or through the middle of the main channel when the river is navigable.¹⁰³ If this international principle is adhered to, then Russia stands to lose control of several islands in the channel. Afanseyev's stance is that this is a natural outcome and that some islands will go to China and some to Russia. He goes on to state,

There is no need for emotion here. It must be approached with a view to the long-term interests of Russia and China--namely, to have a stable, delineated and fair border. That will rule out any conflict between our two countries and will create a firm basis for good-neighborliness. I think we now have quite good prospects for relations with all countries in the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁰⁴

This is the statement of a high-ranking Russian politician, and represents the official policies of the central authorities in Moscow. The attitudes and statements of lower level politicians and civilians living in the

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

Russian Far East differ substantially from the official, foreign policy statements coming from Moscow.

D. REGIONAL RUSSIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD FAR EAST

BORDER DEMARCATION

As early as the fall of 1993, Russian press reports have carried numerous articles in which Russian political figures who themselves live in the Russian Far East, or represent the interests of other Russians who do, have voiced serious concern over how the demarcation of the border is being carried out. Some have expressed discontent, opposition and even open hostility to the treaty of 1991 and the ongoing border demarcation. Once again, a problem has arisen over the ownership of a few tiny islands in the Amur and Ussuri rivers- one of which, Damanskiy Island, was the site of the bitter fighting described in chapter four. Some press reports have even stated that the Chinese, in violation of the 1991 treaty, have dumped barge loads of rubble into the channel near Damanskiy island to create a "special dike, which has virtually turned the island into a peninsula."¹⁰⁵ The Chinese have therefore

¹⁰⁵"Border Demarcation 'Extremely Badly Timed'," PM0510141793, Moscow, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, in Russian, 05

"taken away [Damanskiy Island] from Russia apart from any demarcation effort, with the silent consent of the Russian leadership."¹⁰⁶ Another report has charged that the Amur river is changing it's course, though not in spontaneous fashion, but "singlemindedly in the direction of the Russian shore under the influence of artful hydrotechnical structure set up by the Chinese on their shores."¹⁰⁷

These reports, coupled with statements like those made by a local Cossack leader in the Amur region in which he protested the, "handover of age-old cossack land to a neighboring state,"¹⁰⁸ have served to keep the demarcation of the border in the headlines. Local Russian press reports have run stories lamenting the decision of the Moscow authorities to allow the demarcation of the border to be made in accordance with the *thalweg* principle. The articles point out to the Russian readers that as a result of the 1991 treaty the border with China is,

Oct, 1993, (FBIS SOV-93-192, 6 OCT, 1993, p. 4).

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷"Chinese-Amur Border Demarcation Issues Reviewed," 944F0351B, Khabarovsk, Priamurskiye Vedomostie, in Russian, 01 Feb, 1994, (FBIS-USR-94-022 09 March, 1994, p.3).

¹⁰⁸"Border Demarcation 'Extremely Badly' Timed," OP. CIT.

...shifting somewhat to the Russian side, and around 2,000 square kilometers of land--mainly on islands in the Amur and its tributaries--have moved into PRC jurisdiction.¹⁰⁹

Also, some local Russian politicians have made rash statements which have created an air of confusion and tension. The governor of the Primorskiy Province, V. Ishayev, appeared on local Russian television (fall 1993) and said, "We will never agree to the handover of Great Ussuri or Tarabov Islands."¹¹⁰ This prompted the Chinese consulate in Khabarovsk to make official inquiries to the Russian government as to whether this was "the authorities' official position or whether the governor was speaking merely as a private citizen."¹¹¹ Statements of this sort are clearly at odds with the Russian government policy of cooperation with China over border issues. However, the fact that local politicians, regardless of their status or rank, make these types of statements indicate that when it comes to the handover of land, however small it may be, passions among some Russians still run high.

It is interesting to note that, Mr. Ishayev is not the

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid.

only one who has voiced concern over the status of these two islands. Ivan Kandaurov, a member of the Amur Region Russian Geographical Society, wrote an article in which he claims there is a Chinese plot to annex the "Tarabovo-Ussuri island group, whose total area amounts to about thirty square kilometers."¹¹² These islands mentioned were not affected by the demarcation efforts as they are located in an sector of the border near Khabarovsk, in the Kazakevichevo Channel, which was not covered specifically in the 1991 treaty.¹¹³ Since they were not covered, the status quo was to be maintained until which time the ownership of the islands could be negotiated. That is, the islands are, for the mean time, supposed to remain under Russian jurisdiction. Mr. Kandaurov has gone on record maintaining that the Chinese are not satisfied with the status quo, and purposely had the area left out of the treaty in order to take advantage of Russia and incorporate the area into the PRC. He cites as his evidence a Chinese atlas dated 1986 which shows the islands as Chinese territory, and refers to them by a Chinese name--the Fuyuang Triangle.

¹¹²"Chinese-Amur Border Demarcation Issues Reviewed," OP. CIT.

¹¹³Ibid.

Quite some time before the demarcation efforts were begun, the Chinese had already decided the fate of the Tarabovo-Ussuri islands. Thus, page 72 of the atlas of Heilongjiang Province, published back in 1986, shows the Tarabovo-Ussuri islands as Chinese territory. This atlas is distributed at various international conferences, i.e., the concept is being imbued in people of the Far East that the islands sooner or later will be transferred to China.¹¹⁴

Thus, a number of Russians living in the Far East have raised the specter of the "Yellow Peril," inscrutable Chinese slowly, subtly, quietly taking away Russian territory island by island.

E. CONCLUSION/OUTLOOK

While the Chinese are quietly making an effort to demarcate the border on terms as favorably as possible to them, they are still conducting negotiations with the Moscow government. The Far Eastern Russians have, through their inflammatory press reporting, brought the issue of the disposition of a number of Amur basin islands to the central government level. These islands, which the Russians maintain the Chinese are trying to annex, include the two islands near Khabarovsk (Tarabovo-Ussuri), and Bolshoy

¹¹⁴Ibid.

Island in the Ussuri River.

Shortly before the round of talks in Beijing in February 1994, the Chinese suggested that they were "prepared to concede Bolshoy Island"¹¹⁵ if Russia were to make a similar concession with regard to the Tarabovo-Ussuri Islands in the Amur River. This was not acceptable to the Russians, who do not want to give up the aforementioned islands near Khabarovsk, though this did not signal the end of dialogue between the two sides. This Chinese request and subsequent Russian refusal does, however, signal the "existence of radical differences,"¹¹⁶ and indicate that substantial stumbling blocks still remain.

The differences in the ongoing debate over the ownership of river islands, were they allowed to deteriorate to the polemics of the late sixties, would probably lead to conflict--given the relative strength of China vis-a-vis the Russian Republic in the Far East. This, however, is not the current case. With a few exceptions, most notably the status of the river islands in the Amur region, the border issues which resulted in warfare in 1969 have been solved.

¹¹⁵"Border River Islands Not to be Handed Over to PRC," PM2502124394, Moscow, Izvestiya, in Russian, 25 Feb, 1994, (FBIS-SOV-94-039, 28 Feb, 1994, p.3).

¹¹⁶Ibid.

Both sides continue to hold high level talks with regard to the demarcation of the border, and additional summits are being planned. The principle actors in these discussions are Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev on one side, and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen on the other. In a move which clearly illustrates the lengths that both sides are willing to go to in order to smooth out their differences over the border, the Russian and Chinese Foreign Ministers arranged for Chinese President Jiang Zemin to visit Moscow.¹¹⁷

The most recent series of meetings between the Russians and the Chinese began on June 27, 1994, when Qian Qichen arrived in Moscow. Qichen met with Russian President Boris Yelstin, the goal being to, "prepare the second Russian-Chinese summit meeting to be held when Chinese President Jiang Zemin is expected to visit Moscow."¹¹⁸ In addition to meeting with President Yeltsin, Qichen met with Andrey Kozyrev and "initialed an agreement on a fifty-five kilometer section of the western section of the Russian-

¹¹⁷"Kozyrev Continues Official Visit to PRC," LD2701144794, Moscow, ITAR-TASS, in English, 27 Jan, 1994, (FBIS-SOV-94-019, 28 Jan 1994, p.4).

¹¹⁸"Chinese Foreign Minister Arrives in Russia on Visit," 27/6 TASS 260, Moscow, ITAR-TASS, 27 June 1994.

Chinese border."¹¹⁹ The official signing of this agreement took place during the most recent in the continuing series of visits when in September 1994 Chinese President Jiang Zemin traveled to the Russian-Chinese summit in Moscow.¹²⁰

The documents are not yet official, however, and require the ratification of both the Chinese and Russian parliaments.

Only the demarcation of the Amur region remains. The previously described sticking points, the issue of ownership of the channel islands, was discussed yet again during the fall summit, but to no avail. As of this writing absolutely no progress has been made on this issue and the demarcation of that section of the Far Eastern border will remain unresolved for the foreseeable future.

¹¹⁹Ibid. Though not specifically addressed in this thesis, this agreement further demonstrates that the Russians and Chinese are making progress toward the normalization of their long, common border.

¹²⁰This was Jiang Zemin's first visit to Moscow as the Chinese President. In 1991, when he was the Chinese Communist Party leader, he visited Moscow for five days and signed the initial pact with Mikhail Gorbachev which brought about the ongoing border demarcation efforts.

VII. A POTENTIAL NEW OBSTACLE IN BORDER RELATIONS- CHINESE INFLUX INTO THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST

A. OVERVIEW

The border dispute between Russia and China has for the most part been "solved" through diplomatic process. Both sides have been willing to compromise and not let the emotional factors of the past get in the way of further negotiations. However, recent reports, primarily out of the Russian press point, to new problem areas that are developing in the far east border region which have the potential to disrupt current amicable border relations. These reports claim that there is a growing influence of Chinese nationals in the Far East Republic of Russia since the opening of cross border contact in 1987.¹²¹ Russian authorities estimate there has been an influx of up to one million Chinese nationals into Russia, both by legal and illegal means. With new bilateral border agreements having been established, it is natural that cross border contacts between the Chinese and Russians would increase in kind.

¹²¹After reviewing press reports and communiqués out of Russia and China (FBIS) there has been no noted response by either the Chinese government or press to the Russian claim of a deliberate Chinese expansion into the Russian Far East. Also Chinese press reports have not indicated a "Russian" problem on their side of the border.

But now Russians in the Far East region, especially conservative elements, have begun to voice their concern over the growing problem of the Chinese influence in the Russian Far East. Reports out of Moscow and the Far East Republic point to three specific problem area that have arisen from the influx of Chinese into Russia:

1. Some conservative Russians in the Far East are beginning to believe that the Chinese have been crossing the border to expand their influence in the Far East Republic of Russia.
2. The influx of Chinese has put an additional strain on the Far East Russian economy.
3. Crime within Russia has increased due to the increased border contact and influx of illegal Chinese aliens.

B. EXPANSION BY CHINA?

Is there a plot by the Chinese government to expand it's influence within the Russian Far East? Recent Russian publications have began to identify this as the reason for

the increased travels by Chinese citizens into Russian territory. In a publication written by V. Sharov in the October 1993 issue of Literaturnaya Gazeta, called "The China Card," he outlines "a very gloomy prospect for the Far East- multimillion Chinese masses hovering menacingly over it."¹²² Also a series of articles produced by the Russian press have suggested that the influx of Chinese into the Russian Far East is part of a determined effort on the part of the Beijing government. These conservative elements of the Russian press have purported,

China's silent expansion is under way and that a vast number of Chinese are illegally penetrating our territory and living there. These articles maintain also that the territories bordering China have been stabbed in the back--government documents that have been signed are, in fact, opening our borders to the uncontrolled entry of Chinese.¹²³

Further, the executive director of the Siberian Agreement Association of Russia stated in very harsh tones, "federal [Russian] authorities have been ignoring this

¹²²"Foreign Affairs Official on China Policy," 994K0745A Moscow Literaturnaya Gazeta in Russian No. 7, 16 Feb 94 pp 9,14 (FBIS-USR-94-002, 9 March 1994).

¹²³Ibid.

problem."¹²⁴ He then went on to state that:

Nearly one million Chinese are currently living in Siberia and the Far East without permits and without having registered anywhere (i.e. illegally). In effect, they are seizing Russian territories.¹²⁵

This issue of possible Chinese expansion was important enough to the Governor of the Maritime Province of Russia, Yevgeniy Nazdratenko, that he brought the matter up to the government level in August 1993 at a meeting of the Russian Council of Ministers. He demanded "resolute counteraction to Chinese expansion" within the Maritime Province of Russia.¹²⁶ When the Russian Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, visited the Far East in the fall of 1993, local leaders,

...suggested that the Prime Minister take a number of measures of a regulatory nature to restrict the access of Chinese "speculators" to the region.¹²⁷

¹²⁴"Emigres from China, CIS Raise Tensions in Siberia," 944F0097B Moscow Izvestiya in Russian 2 Nov 93 First Edition p 5 (FBIS-USR-93-146, 17 November 1993).

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶"Status of Russian-Chinese Trade Relations," 944Q0098a Moscow Kommersant in Russian No 46, 22 Nov 93 pp 26-27 (FBIS-USR-93-162 22 December 1993).

¹²⁷Ibid.

This rhetoric of a "Chinese plot" has been for the most part dismissed by Russian government officials in Moscow. E. V. Afanasyev, First Deputy Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Asia-Pacific Region spoke for the Foreign Ministry on this account.

We in the Foreign Ministry and in Russia's Embassy in China have the impression that it is by no means a question of any long term, conscious, officially approved strategy. We believe that the issue of China's claims on our vast territory has been settled.¹²⁸

The Russian fear of overbearing Chinese influence in Russia is not a new phenomenon. Russian anti-Chinese chauvinism dates back to the first contact between the two nations over 300 years ago. A good example of underlying Russian sentiments toward the Chinese, is a quote by the Russian author, V. Arsenyev, at the beginning of this century who stated that, "so long as the China exists, a yellow danger exists for Russia."¹²⁹ There are Russians

¹²⁸"Foreign Affairs official on China Policy," OP... cit.

¹²⁹"Expanding Chinese Influence in Vladivostok Decried," 934F1160B Vladivostok Vladivostok in Russian 1 Sep 93 pp 1, 5 (FBIS-USR-93-132 11 October 1993).

today, some of whom are becoming increasingly vocal, who share the same sentiments.

C. CHINESE INFLUENCE ON FAR EAST RUSSIAN ECONOMY

There is also growing discontent by the Russian Far East community who see the Chinese influx as damaging to the already unstable economy within the region. With the difficulty for the Russian Far East to implement a "market-orientated" reform of their economy, also coinciding with an influx of Chinese "settlers" into the region, Russians have begun to shift blame for their economic plight by pointing to the Chinese influence. They have seen economic border contacts, especially Chinese "shuttlers" traveling to the Russian Far East increase dramatically since border relations improved.

After a long interruption, at the end of the 1980's agreements were concluded to regulate the crossing of the Russian-Chinese borders. Now more than 80 percent of Russian-Chinese commodity turnover is through border relations, that is in the Far East. Chinese capital participates in approximately half of all the joint ventures created in the region. According to various figures, for 6.5 million Russians in the Far East there are from 300,000 to 1 million Chinese. In the eastern part of [Russia] a new national minority is already emerging, and unlike the Russian and the majority of others, it continues

to increase in numbers.¹³⁰

According to elements of the Russian press, Chinese influence in trade relations is especially strong in the Russian Far East. This region accounts for up to eighty percent of all Russian trade and other contacts with China.¹³¹ Rapid development of Russian-Chinese trade relations has been evaluated by some Russian officials as "dangerous" to the region. V. Ivankov, the executive director of the Siberian Agreement Association stated the view that "cheap" Chinese labor within the Far East is a myth.

Guestworkers, most of them from China, come to the [Maritime Province] under contracts that are usually concluded with industrial enterprises. They work on several construction projects in the province capital and grow vegetables on the subsidiary farms. Their labor is paid for with mineral fertilizer, nickel and aluminum. In short, it is a barter arrangement: workers for raw materials.¹³²

¹³⁰"Status of Russian-Chinese Trade Relations," OP.. cit.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²"Emigres From China, CIS Raise Tensions in Siberia," 944F0097B Moscow Izvestiya in Russian 2 Nov 93 First Edition p 5 (FBIS-USR-93-146, 17 November 1993).

An example of this type of arrangement occurred in 1992, when government officials in the Maritime Province examined the possibility of inviting Chinese workers to raise vegetables. They were shocked to hear that China asked for five tons of aluminum for each worker. Heilongjiang Province, China, on the border of the Russian Maritime Province, was prepared in 1992 to send 300,000 workers alone to Russia for this type of work. This lead the author of "Siberia--For Russians Only?", Aleksey Tarasov, to remark that there were "10 million [Russian Maritime Province] residents on the verge of unemployment. Is Siberia now to be used to enhance China's might?"¹³³ Russians, especially in the Maritime Province, have begun to blame high unemployment on the Chinese.

Today the Chinese, to a man, are engaged in trade, thus also resolving at our expense the problem of employment. More than 80 percent of the Chinese coming to the Maritime [Province] for various purposes have the status of "awaiting work" back home, which factually speaking, means the status of being unemployed.¹³⁴

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴"Expanding Chinese Influence in Vladivostok Decried," OP.. cit.

Another aspect of the economic problem for the Russian Far East is the outflow of capital from the region back into China by Chinese merchants traveling back and forth between Russia and China.

In the opinion of the bureaucrats from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Relations, the Ministry of Security of Russia, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, "shuttle" business is now very widespread (the volume of shuttle operations during the first half of 1993 reached \$614.29 million, according to Chinese figures) and is one of the main channels for the outflow of foreign currency from Russia: In one trip the average Russian "shuttle" brings \$500-3,000 to China.¹³⁵

An article in Vladivostok relating the influence of Chinese in the Russia's Maritime Province, stated, "the currency drain into China by way of the Maritime [Province] has already become a state problem for Russia."¹³⁶ Also according to this article,

millions of U.S. dollars are going down the "Chinese hole." This year alone [1993] the total export of cash currency to China came to

¹³⁵"Status of Russian-Chinese Trade Relations," 944Q0098A Moscow Kommersant In Russian No 46, 22 Nov 93 pp 26-27 (FBIS-USR-93-162, 22 December 1993).

¹³⁶"Expanding Chinese Influence in Vladivostok Decried," 934F1160B Vladivostok Vladivostok in Russian 1 Sep 93 pp 1 (FBIS-USR-93-132, 11 October 1993).

approximately \$50 million. It is not accidental that special attention was paid to the Chinese problem by former Russian Federation Minister of Security Baranikov during his recent trip to the Far East, and then by Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, who was seriously concerned about the extent of the illegal currency export.¹³⁷

The Russians also complain that the Chinese have taken advantage of the Russian economic plight by creating conditions that are more advantageous to China.

First, one observes the gradual infiltration of the excess population on the Far Eastern land of Russia under the guise of agricultural and construction workers; secondly, the Chinese side proposes to all its Russian partners the construction on our territory of real estate on very favorable terms, promising as much as 80 percent of the financing of such construction but with the proviso that they be given in exchange as their property 20-30 percent of the constructed real estate, primarily in Vladivostok, Nakhodka, and Khasanskiy Rayon.¹³⁸

D. CRIME

The openness of the border region has also brought with it a sharply worsened crime situation in the Russian Far East. The Russian Interior Department and the Maritime Territorial Administration believe "the cause of the growing

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Ibid.

crime rate is the open border with China."¹³⁹ According to a member of the Ministry of Security of the Russian Administration for the Maritime Province, Vladivostok has become "the largest contraband center on the Russian-Chinese border."¹⁴⁰ The officials of the Ministry of Security have also claimed that the Chinese mafia is beginning to gain a strong hold within the Far East. Specifically,

the Chinese mafia grouping "triada" has already opened up channels for delivery from China of prepared narcotic substances for their sale on the territory of the Far East, Siberia, Moscow, and St. Petersburg.¹⁴¹

At a news conference held by the Moscow Ministry of Security, a worker "expressed the fear that in the near future Russia would encounter a Chinese mafia that would make the Chechens look like mere neophytes."¹⁴²

There have also been noted instances of cooperation

¹³⁹"Maritime Kray to Expel Illegal PRC Visitors," LD1711170793 Moscow Interfax in English 1103 GMT 17 Nov 1993 (FBIS-SOV-93-221 18 Nov 1993).

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Ibid. Chechens have the reputation of being the most feared and powerful ethnic group in Russian organized crime.

between Chinese and Russian criminal elements. In 1993, three Chinese and two Muscovites were arrested in Moscow for capturing a Chinese businessmen and demanding a \$100,000 dollar ransom. The Chinese who were arrested in Russia were using falsified passports and entry visas. Connections between Russian commercial store owners and Chinese criminals, who sell goods shipped in illegally from China, have also been documented.¹⁴³

It must be noted the governments of Russia and China are working on cooperative efforts to crack down on crime and mafia organizations. The Chinese Embassy in Moscow has stated,

The Chinese Government is keenly aware of a handful of Chinese citizens who commit crimes in Russia and has actively sought cooperation with the relevant Russian departments in bringing them to justice.¹⁴⁴

Additionally,

...the [Chinese] embassy is willing to closely cooperate with the Russian departments in properly solving problems in accordance with the Russian laws and norms so as to help preserve and develop

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴"Chinese Beaten, Robbed During Moscow Turmoil," OW2810034093 Moscow Radio Moscow in Mandarin 1000 GMT 23 Oct 93 (FBIS-SOV-93-207 28 October 1993).

friendly exchanges between the Russian and Chinese people.¹⁴⁵

To this end Russian and Chinese law enforcement agencies signed in November 1993, a cooperation agreement which cracks down on crime and mafia organizations in the border areas.¹⁴⁶ The agreement was concluded by representatives of the Maritime Province Internal Affairs Directorate and Chinese Bodies for Security in Society in order to "put things [in the border region] in order."¹⁴⁷ The document stipulates,

law and order bodies of contiguous territories will receive full support and assistance in seeking out law-breakers on both sides of the border. The appropriate services of both countries will prepare a universal directory of the most notorious criminals and, if necessary, will carry out joint operations to detain them.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶"Far East Border Area, China Sign Anti-Smuggling Accord," OW3011054193 Moscow Radio Moscow in Mandarin 1300 GMT 6 Nov 93 (FBIS-SOV-93-228 30 November 1993).

¹⁴⁷"Border Cooperation Accord Concluded With China," LD0611104793 Moscow ITAR-TASS World Service in Russian 0404 GMT 6 Nov 93 (FBIS-SOV-93-214 8 November 1993).

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

E. CONCLUSION

The agreements signed between Russia and China have theoretically, on a government to government level, put an end to the claims and counter-claims regarding their expansive common border. The respective governments, remembering all too well the results of the heated polemics of the 1960's and 1970's, have made great strides in both the normalization of bilateral relations, but also in the settlement of the border issue.

Many problems still exist between the two nations, and it will take several more years before all the outstanding border issues are resolved. Of the many issues still affecting the solution of the border problems, the influx of Chinese into the Russian Far East has become a new and potentially dangerous obstacle for both players in the region. However, this issue has up to this point been one-sided. The Beijing government has remained silent and has not responded to the continuing rhetoric coming out of Russia. The Chinese leadership most likely realizes that the conservative Russians who are responsible for the bulk of the rhetoric and the anti-Chinese sentiments are not in a position of central government leadership and, while they will be watched closely, there is no immediate cause for

alarm or rash counter action. However, the growing "anti-Chinese" sentiments, which are becoming more pervasive among the local Russian community in the Far East, could become the new impetus for renewed aggression along the Sino-Russian border.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

A. OUTLOOK

In taking on this topic for our thesis, we initially set out to prove that the long Russo-Chinese border was still a major problem, much like it was in the late 1960s, and that the Chinese had a plan to expand into Russia in a move similar to that of Nazi Germany in search of "lebensraum." We thought this way because to us it seemed that, after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia was so weak and in such disarray that it was ripe for Chinese expansion. After researching this topic and writing this thesis we have come to the conclusion that this is not the case. Relations between Russia and China are cordial, and the Far Eastern border is not likely to once again become a major source of contention between the two states.

On a national level, the majority of the problems which exist with regard to their common border have been hashed out and declarations/treaties have been signed to that effect. This is not to say, however, that problems do not still exist. The issue of the river islands remains unresolved and, on a regional/local level, there is a great deal of friction and distrust on the part of both the

Russians and the Chinese with regard to cross border relations. This notwithstanding, the border, although at times a major issue, is only one in a multitude of aspects of Russo-Chinese relations. Over the course of the last three hundred years Russo-Chinese relations have ranged from alliance to open warfare. The current trend in relations is positive, though in some ways it appears the Russians and Chinese have simply agreed to put border problems aside in favor of taking advantage of each other in other spheres. An example of this is evident in the regional economic relations between the two. These economic measures, sometimes formulated by freelance actors in get rich quick schemes, though on the surface they illustrate amicable relations, could in the long run become a source of dissension. By this we mean simply that the Russian economy is in dire straits and is desperate for money. The Chinese, who are in the midst of rapid economic growth, have money to spend and want Russian technology and military equipment. The Russians, especially those who reside in the Far East, have embarked on numerous projects with the Chinese, some with the blessing of Moscow and others without. These economic ties with the Chinese, while they do contribute to the Russian economy, are increasingly seen by some Russians

as coming at too high a price. For instance the immigration problem and the loss of Russian jobs to the Chinese, and the currency drain from the Russian Far East to China has caused some Russians to sound the alarm. Additionally, and more ominously, there is growing concern in Russia about the Chinese military buildup/modernization, especially since the modernization is being made possible by Russian military sales to China.

While there remains some nervousness, hesitation, and plain distrust between the two, the outlook for the foreseeable future is the maintenance of the status quo along the border while the two governments focus their attention on larger, more important internal issues which can have dramatic effects on the stability and survival of their respective regimes. This status quo, however, will depend on just that--the stability and survival of the Moscow and Beijing governments.

B. POSSIBLE FUTURES

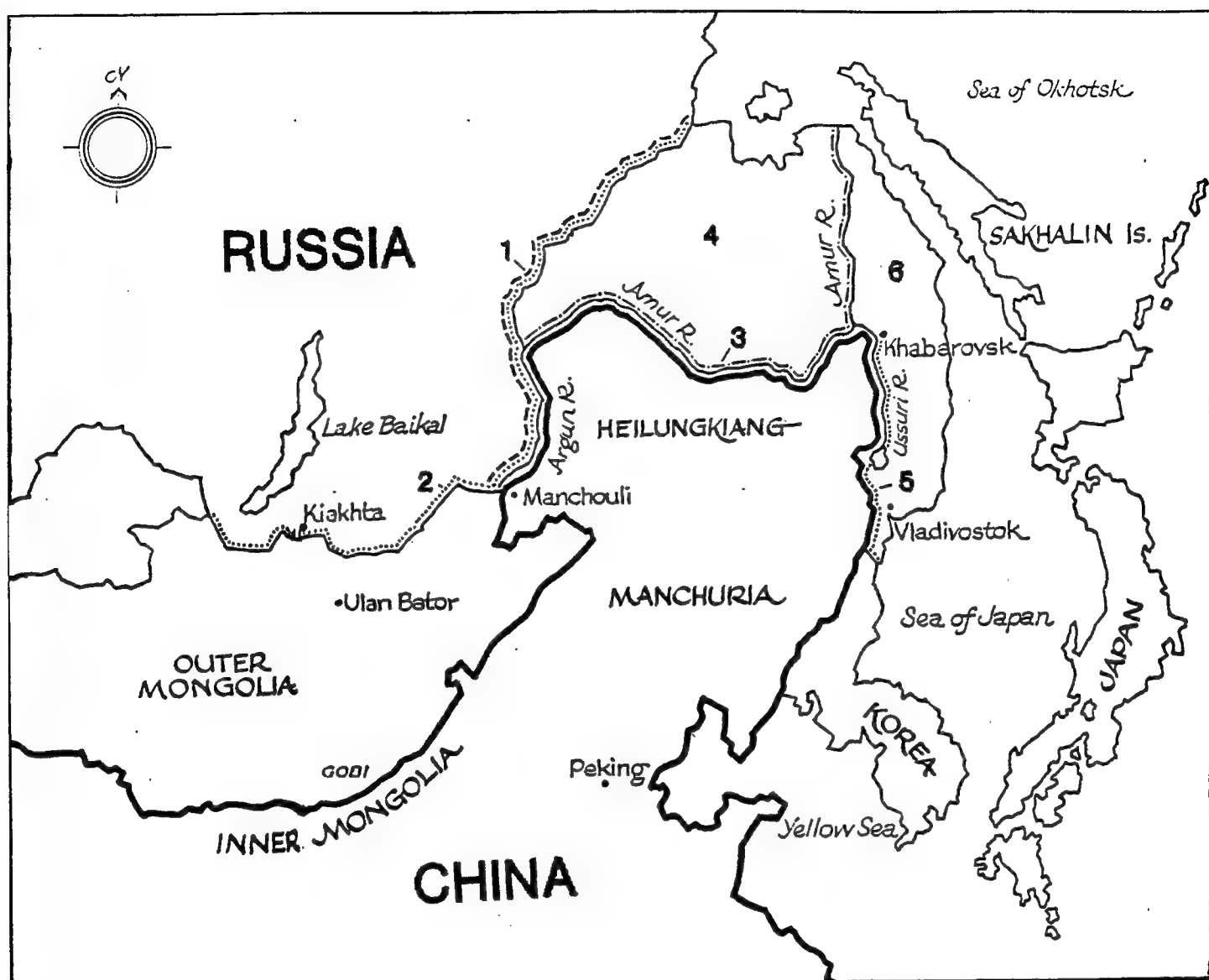
While this thesis is dedicated to the history and present condition of the long-standing border dispute between Russia and China, we have, in the course of our research, run into more questions than we can possibly

answer. For instance, what will become of China when the current leadership dies? Will China break up? If and when China breaks up, what will become of the border between Russia and China? Conversely, what will become of the Russian government? Will there be another coup attempt in the near future? Will the Russian Far East, sparsely populated, rich in natural resources, and at a great geographical distance from the center in Moscow, break away and become an independent state? If this were to occur, in order to survive separate from the rest of the Russian Federation, a likely future for such an independent state would lie with China, regardless of the nature or makeup of the Chinese state and/or political system.

These scenarios are of course hypothetical and highly speculative. However, any one of these scenarios, or combination of them, would have a major effect on Russo-Chinese diplomatic relations, and by extension effect the nature of border relations in ways which we are not capable of discerning at this time. The next few years will be the test for both China and Russia. The inescapable fact of the matter is that they have been in contact with each other for over three hundred years, and in one way or the other they will be forced to come to terms with each other. As we have

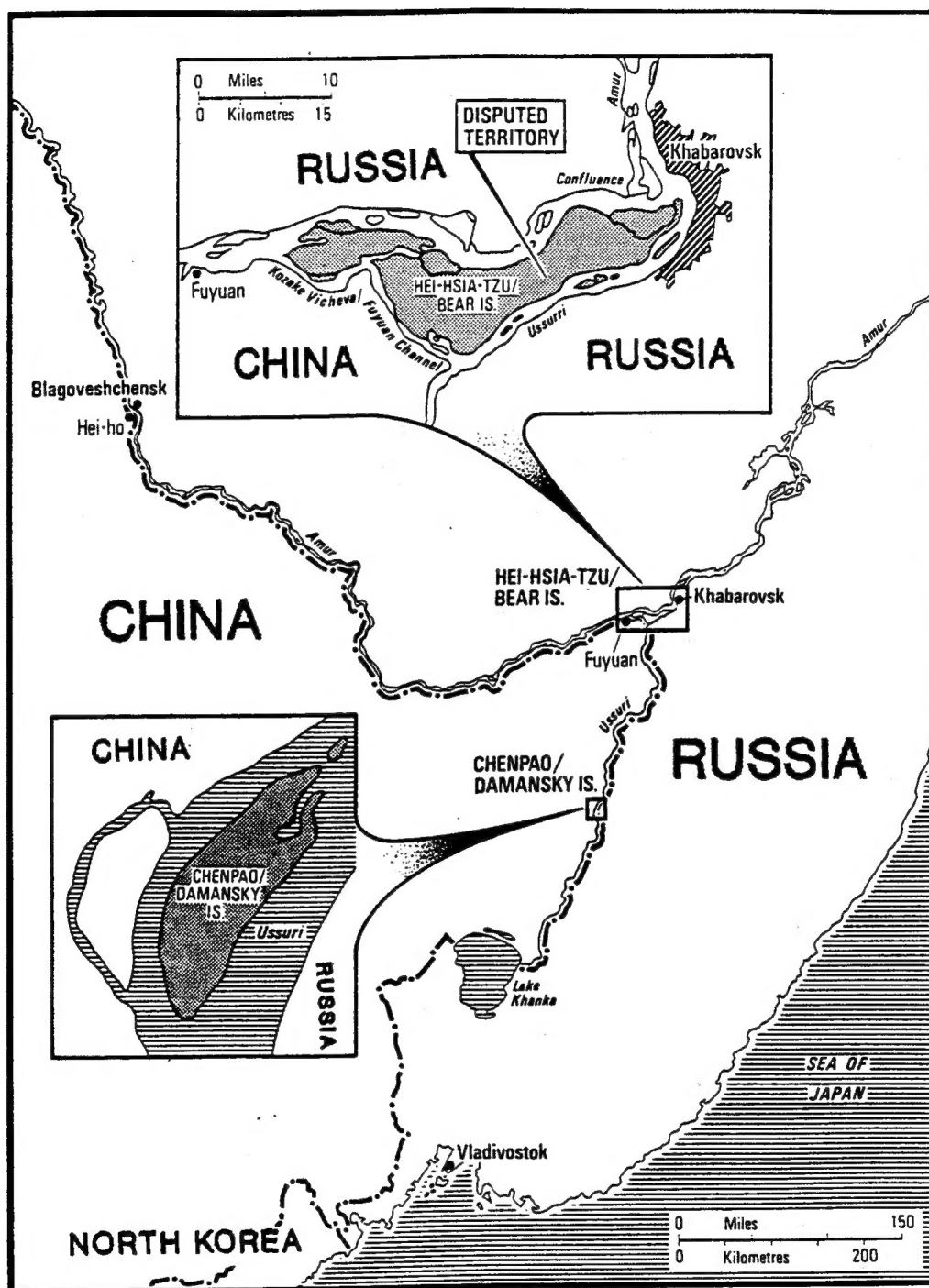
seen the initial relationship was borne in violence and warfare. The nature of the relationship during the course of the next several hundred intervening years was much like that of a sine wave--there were periodic highs and lows. The current cycle is on a high note. How long will it last and what will be the outcome of another falling out? These questions can only be answered by the passage of time, but certainly merit close observation as both states have a major effect on the balance of power in Asia.

APPENDIX A. THE FAR EASTERN BORDER BETWEEN 1689-1860



1. Boundary defined by the Treaty of Nerchinsk, 1689
2. Boundary defined by Treaty of Kiakhta, 1727
3. Boundary defined by the Treaty of Aigun, 1858
4. Territory ceded to Russia in 1858
5. Boundary defined by Treaty of Peking, 1860
6. Territory ceded to Russia in 1860

APPENDIX B. THE AMUR BASIN



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